

זכור את יום השבת לקדשו.
ששת ימים תעבד ועשית כל מלאכתך,
יום השביעי שבת לה'

SHABBAT LASHEM

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PARA ADUMA: THE ULTIMATE PARADOX

DINA PARKUS
SHEVET OROT

In Parashat Chukat, we learn about what is seen to be the ultimate *chok* (law without an apparent reason) of the Torah; that of the red heifer or 'Para Aduma'. Any person who comes into contact with a dead body shall become *tameh*, unclean, for seven days. In order to become pure again, a kohen slaughters the Para Aduma and sprinkles its ashes on the person who is *tameh*. While the person on whom the ashes are sprinkled becomes purified, the kohen who performed the ritual then becomes impure. This presents quite an interesting question: why would somebody who is pure willingly become impure in order to purify another person who has become impure?

Some call the *chok* of the Parah Adumah the 'Chok HaTorah', or the decree of the Torah. This seems a rather random choice to be seen as the ultimate commandment in the Torah. However, to understand this, we can look at another important concept in the Torah; that of loving your fellow Jew.

While it does not seem so at first glance, the action of using the Para Aduma is the ultimate example of loving your fellow Jew. As mentioned before, in order to pu-

rify a person who has become impure, another person, usually the kohen, must also become impure in carrying out this ritual.

Another idea that relates to this is that of *Mesirut Nefesh*, the concept of giving away your soul to help someone else. An important idea in Judaism is that of the connection between soul and body, and that neither one is complete without the other, and *Mesirut Nefesh* is an excellent example to show the relationship between the two; a person uses their body to perform an act of kindness, which in turn is a way of 'giving away' their soul.

Lastly, why is it so difficult for us to have an understanding of *chukim* like the ritual of Para Aduma? This problem is ultimately a way for us to look at how we relate to our Judaism; there are two options. One, a person can look at the mitzvot and say, "I understand this, that makes sense to me, this seems logical... that is why I will do these mitzvot." Alternatively, one can say, "I don't understand this, that doesn't make sense... however I am a Jew and I have been commanded to do this by Hashem, and that is why I will do these mitzvot." While it is always a good thing to try and deepen our understanding of the Torah and the mitzvot, ultimately the second way of thinking is on a higher level and is one we should all strive to attain.

**DINA WAS A MADRICHA ON ALEPH SUMMER
MACHANE 5779.**

London	In: 21:04 Out: 22:32	Oxford	In: 21:07 Out: 22:39	Leeds	In: 21:20 Out: 23:02
Manchester	In: 21:21 Out: 23:01	Bristol	In: 21:11 Out: 22:42	Liverpool	In: 21:24 Out: 23:03
Cambridge	In: 21:04 Out: 22:38	Birmingham	In: 21:14 Out: 22:49	Jerusalem	In: 19:13 Out: 20:31

CHUKAT-BALAK 5780: IGNORANCE IS BLISS

RAV JOEL KENIGSBURG | RAV SHALIACH



The opening of Parashat Chukat is one of the most difficult sections in the Torah to understand. The law of the Para Aduma (the red heifer) is one that left many of the greatest Jewish minds stumped.

Many of the commentators who wrote entire books dedicated to exploring the reasons behind the mitzvot simply gave up when it came to this one. The Sefer Hachinuch writes that since even Shlomo Hamelech couldn't understand the reasons for this mitzvah, he dares not attempt to come up with his own explanation.

But maybe the Para Aduma is the rule rather than the exception. Although there are a few places where the Torah explicitly gives us reasons for mitzvot (for example tzitzit - in order to remember all the mitzvot) by the vast majority no reasons are given at all. Here the Torah goes even further, defining the Para as "חוקת" – a command which by definition has no explanation that we can understand. And it's not just the Para which is defined as a *chok* – it's the entire Torah too.

As an archetype for all of the Torah's mitzvot, the Para Aduma teaches us that try as we might to understand and explain, the ultimate reason we do any mitzvot is because Hashem commanded. Has we been given specific reasons, we might have thought that once a reason no longer fits a given circumstance the mitzvah would not be binding. By not providing reasons for its commands, the Torah helps us to better appreciate their eternal value.

In a similar way, the decrees enacted by Chazal are often not mentioned with a specific reason either. The Mishna in Shabbat tells of the prohibition of reading on Shabbat by candlelight. The Gemara explains that the

reason for the decree is that one might come to tilt the candle and cause the wick to burn quicker, thereby breaking Shabbat. The story is then told of R' Yishmael ben Elisha, who knowing that even when reading he wouldn't come to tilt the candle, went against this decree and read by candlelight. However, he erred and very nearly tilted the lamp, (or according to another version in the Gemara, did tilt the lamp!) The Gemara concludes that he was then forced to admit to the greatness of the words of the Sages. Rav Kook explains that the greatness here refers to the fact that they didn't provide a reason for their decree. Once a reason had later been given, it became that much easier to rationalize against it and unwittingly enter the trap the decree had come to prevent.

ONCE A REASON HAD BEEN GIVEN FOR THE DECREE, IT BECAME THAT MUCH EASIER TO RATIONALIZE AGAINST IT AND UNWITTINGLY ENTER THE TRAP THE DECREE HAD COME TO PREVENT

Rav Kook explains further that there are two aims behind the enactments of Chazal. On a practical level they prevent a person from coming to sin, but on a deeper level they are meant to prevent us from entering a situation

where transgressing the Torah's word is even a conscious possibility. By knowingly limiting ourselves from entering such a situation, we increase our understanding of the Torah's importance. The reason for not reading by candlelight on Shabbat is not only to prevent one from tilting the lamp, it's to prevent one from even thinking about tilting the lamp!

Every command in the Torah is accompanied by deep reasons making it relevant to all generations. Ironically, sometimes it's by leaving those reasons unstated, that the Torah ensures we can always connect to its timeless message.

FOLLOW RAV JOEL ON FACEBOOK (RAV SHALIACH PAGE) AND ON TWITTER (@JOEL KENIGSBURG).

A TASTE FROM THE ARCHIVES: THE VISION IS STILL ALIVE

MARC WEINBERG: YOM HA'ATZMAUT ADDRESS 5759

At the end of Gemara Makkot, Daf 24b, we are told a wonderful story about a crucial event in the life of Rabbi Akiva. The Gemara paints for us the scene of a desolate site which was once the place where the temple stood and, lo and behold, in front of the eyes of Rabbi Akiva and his colleagues a pack of wolves emerged from the Holy of Holies. Suddenly, the Rabbis began to cry, and Rabbi Akiva was laughing and asked them, "*mipnei ma atem bochim* – why are you crying?" Slightly puzzled, they replied the obvious: "A place which is so holy and now a pack of wolves is roaming there, shouldn't we be crying?" Rabbi Akiva then explains to them his reaction. He refers to the prophecy of Uriah (Micah 3:12) saying that if it has been fulfilled that Tzion will be ploughed up like a field, then the prophecy of Zechariah (Zechariah 8:4-5) that "*Od yeshvu zkenim uzkenot birchovot Yerushalayim, urchovot ha'ir yimalu yeladim veyeladot mesachakim birchovoteha* – old men and women will sit in the streets of Yerushalayim and the streets of the city will be filled with boys and girls playing" – then this prophecy must one day be fulfilled as well. The story finishes off with the Rabbis saying to Akiva, "*Akiva Nichamtanu, Akiva Nichamtanu* – Akiva you have comforted us, Akiva you have comforted us" – meaning 'Akiva you have taught us something'.

This story gives us an insight into what was a fundamental value in Rabbi Akiva's life: he was a visionary. He was standing amidst the ruins of the temple, but he was still able to smile. He was able to look ahead; his dream was still alive and he would never let go of it whatever the current reality was in front of him. For Rabbi Akiva life was exciting – it was a challenge. He looked at the opportunity life presented and over and above everything he had a vision.

The values of Bnei Akiva are built on this ability of Rabbi Akiva to envision. Let me elaborate! What does it mean to have a vision? What are the crucial components of a visionary? Firstly, a visionary looks beyond the present time; having a vision means not being stuck in the now. Rabbi Akiva was able to look beyond the destruction of the Temple to the next stage of history. In Bnei Akiva as well we are always looking at new horizons, always searching for new educational techniques and new approaches of implementing our ideology. Bnei Akiva should always try to anticipate the next stage of Jewish

history, and in preparation for that should face the issues that are at the cutting edge of Jewish life.

Secondly, a visionary looks beyond the current ideas; having a vision means seeing what nobody else can see, being open to new ideas. The Rabbis could only see the destruction of the Temple, but Rabbi Akiva could see the rebuilding. He had challenged their conventional ideas and accepted attitudes; he tried to educate them to adopt a new approach, to see the other side of the situation. I think this dichotomy of perspective is also true for Bnei Akiva. Others look at Bnei Akiva camp as a holiday camp, but for us it's a chance to educate towards our vision, it's a full holistic Jewish experience. Others look at the Bayit as just a clubhouse, but for us it's a place for debate and a home, which brings Israel into our lives. Others look at Israel camp as just tanning and touring, but for us it's a culmination of an educational process where chanichim begin to feel part of the Jewish nation and see how a Jewish nation lives.

Thirdly, a visionary looks beyond their current self; having a vision means being open to internal change. A visionary says, "I am not happy with the way I am". This involves passion and motivation; it involves living for a goal and having a personal challenge. As a religious and communal leader, Rabbi Akiva felt that a different attitude was needed in order to confront a new reality. As Bnei Akiva, the followers of Akiva, we try to develop our educational curriculum, we respond to the now, we discuss our ideology, we challenge ourselves, we do not follow the party line. We should always be saying to ourselves we could do better in everything we do. As a movement we should never be content, we should always try to develop and enhance our ideology, taking a step back and not resting on our laurels.

MARC'S 10TH YARZHEIT TOOK PLACE THIS PAST WEDNESDAY. THIS EXCERPT FROM HIS YOM HA'ATZMAUT ADDRESS WAS DELIVERED IN HIS TIME AS MAZKIR.

WE ARE CURRENTLY DIGITISING OUR HISTORICAL RECORDS AND CHINUCH MATERIALS. IF YOU ARE INTERESTED IN SPONSORING OUR ARCHIVE PLEASE CONTACT ADAM AT OPERATIONS@BAUK.ORG.

WHAT'S GOING ON?

- We are excited to announce that the London and Manchester Batim are opening for **Tefila services!** The **London Bayit** will be opening for **Mincha and Ma'ariv from Monday 6th July at 7.30pm**. Sign up at tinyurl.com/ba-london-tefila. The **Manchester Bayit** will be opening for **Shabbat services** from **Shabbat 11th July**. Sign up link coming soon. Please see our health and safety policy at bauk.org/bayit-tefila.

- We are delighted to have opened bookings for our activities this summer! We will be running **Summer Machane Activities** and **Summer Day Trips** in London and Manchester. For more details, FAQs, the schedule, and to apply go to bauk.org/camps.

- **Sichot B'Ivrit**, our Ivrit ulpan taught by the Bnot Sherut continues on **Sunday at 4.30pm**. To sign up head to bit.ly/ba-ivrit. For more information contact Eli at israel@bauk.org.

- **Bonim Atid**: join us on **Sunday 5th July at 7pm** for the final **Hadracha talk** organised by World Bnei Akiva's Chinuch department: **"The Difference Between Modern Orthodoxy and Religious Zionism"**. Further information at worldbneiakiva.org/bonim-atid.

- In **Year 12** and thinking about your post-high school plans? Come to our second **Torani Taster** session with **Yeshivat Eretz HaTzvi!** With a shiur by **Rav Aviad Tabory** followed by a **Q&A**

with alumni to learn more about the yeshiva. **Wednesday 8th July at 6:30pm** in the Bnei Akiva Zoom Room. For more details contact Eli at israel@bauk.org.

- **Student Bet Midrash** continues on Thursday 9th July! Join us at **7.00pm** for a choice of chaburot by **Gidon Schwartz** and **Daniella Wieder**, followed by a thought from one of our Lilmod Ul'amed participants and a shiur by our guest speaker. Email Chana at chinuch@bauk.org for more details or if you have any questions. Zoom links will be posted on the Student Bet Midrash Facebook page.

- Be sure to like our **Facebook page (Bnei Akiva UK)** and follow our **Instagram (bneiakovuk)** to stay informed of our online content!

- To receive weekly copies of **Shabbat Lashem**, sign up for our mailing list at bauk.org/contact.

- Visit bauk.org/feedback for contact details for all Mazkirut members and to leave any general feedback!

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

1. Why did Hashem need to reassure Moshe not to fear Og? (See **Kli Yakar on 21:34**)

2. What was Balak's intention when he ordered Bilam to flee? (See **Or Hachaim on 24:11**)

SHABBAT SHALOM!!!

Veida 5780

Sunday 26th July

Don't miss the opportunity to submit motions, engage in debates, and shape the future of YOUR tnuah!

- Submit motions, view the Constitution and a report of last year's Veida, and find out how this year's Veida will run at bauk.org/veida.
- Apply for the Hanhalla or to stand as our rep to the Board of Deputies at bauk.org/hustings.
- To submit/second a motion and attend Veida you **MUST** have Mas Chaver! A **special Mas Chaver rate of £5** is available to Chaverim in Shevatim Hineini to Na'aleh at bauk.org/mas-chaver.

If you have any questions do not hesitate to contact Rafi Cohen at mazkir@bauk.org.



The London and Manchester Batim are

OPENING FOR TEFILA!

SIGN UP FOR LONDON SERVICES HERE: [TINYURL.COM/BA-LONDON-TEFILA](https://tinyurl.com/ba-london-tefila)
LINK FOR MANCHESTER SERVICES COMING SOON

READ OUR FULL POLICY AT [WWW.BAUK.ORG/BAYIT-TEFILA](https://www.bauk.org/bayit-tefila)

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