

Parshat Ki Tisa 5777

This week's sedra contains the maftir for parshat parah. It is also linked to the sedra of Ki Tisa.

Chazal tell us that the parah adumah was a kapparah for the sin of the egel hazahav. Writing on parshat Chukat (chapt 19:22) Rashi quotes from the treatise of Reb Moshe HaDarshan who states: "They shall take to you from their own" meaning that the Jews should contribute to the parah adumah from their own money. Just as they removed their own golden rings for the egel, they must contribute their own money as an atonement. Hashem insisted that the parah adumah was funded by the Bnei Yisrael and not from Moshe's property.

Why is it a parah, a mother cow? This is a parable brought by Reb Moshe HaDarshan concerning the son of a maidservant who made a mess in the King's palace. The officer ordered the mother to clear it up just as the mother cow (parah adumah) has to clear up the mess of her calf (egel hazahav).

Why is the parah adumah specifically red? This is because it represents sin. It must not have any blemishes; it must be temimah. Just like the Jews at Har Sinai reached a level of purity, their building of the egel hazahav destroyed that purity and turned them into baalei mumim. So the parah adumah atoned for their lack of purity.

The parah adumah must not have had a yoke on its back. This is a reference to the Jews discarding the yoke of heaven when committing the chait ha'egel.

The most active participant in the preparations of the parah adumah was Elazar the Cohen. This is because the Jews had threatened to kill Aaron Hacoheh having already killed his nephew Chur when he refused to cooperate. However, Aaron was involved and therefore still held accountable for the chait. This is why Aaron could not take part in the parah adumah avodah. Reb Moshe HaDarshan states that the prosecutor cannot become the defence attorney.

The parah adumah was burnt, as was the egel hazahav. When burning the parah adumah the Cohen threw into the conflagration 3 items i.e. cedar wood, hyssop and scarlet dyed wool each representing 1000 Jews since 3000 Jews died following the chait

of the egel hazahav. Hyssop is the lowest bush. A person who sins must lower himself like an ezov.

The Gur Aryeh's perush on Rashi states that the sin of the egel was equivalent to bringing death to the world. When the Jews said naaseh v'nishmah they reached the level of Adom Harishon before he ate from the eitz hada'as. However, when the egel hazahav was formed, the Jews lowered themselves to the level of Adom after he ate from the tree. When Adom ate, he brought mortality to the world. So the sin of the egel brought terumas hamais into the world. The parah adumah therefore purifies those who have been made impure through contact with a dead body

Another peshat of the Gur Aryeh is that when the Jews formed the egel, they made it into a "god" they regarded as the creator of everything. The parah adumah denies that "god" as a creator since the parah is the mother of the egel. A true creator cannot be created.

The Lekach Tov suggests that what we see in the world is not really Emes. It is a virtual reality. When you see a few bits of gold being thrown together to create a golden calf it looks like a productive act of binyan, but in reality it was a terrible churban from which we are still suffering today. Burning a big beautiful cow into a pile of ashes looks like an act of destruction. However, this is chukat hatorah –the reality is not what it seems –it is what Hashem wants from us. it is a productive act of binyan although to some it looks like destruction.

The Kusari maintains that the Jews did not really believe the egel was a G-d. They truly thought Moshe had died; the Soton having shown them a vision of his death. They felt alone and needed to create a go between so that they could relate to G-d. But the main chait of the egel was not avodah zarah but the lack of emunas hachamim which is a type of gaivah. Moshe told them to go to Aaron or Chur to solve thier problems. But they did not ask Chur his advice. Instead they told him what to do and when he did not comply, thye killed him. The Jews thought they knew better. So we take the gaivah of the egel and bow down to the rotzon Hashem by carrying out the Parah Adumah, even though we do not know how it works.