

SICHA SUMMARY

Likkutei Sichos, Vol. 28

Chukas, Sicha 1

The Rambam:

In the laws concerning the red heifer, Rambam writes:

Nine red heifers were offered from the time that they were commanded to fulfill this mitzvah until the time when the Temple was destroyed a second time. The first was brought by Moses our teacher. The second was brought by Ezra. Seven others were offered until the destruction of the Second Temple. And the tenth will be brought by the king Moshiach; may he speedily be revealed. Amen, so may it be G-d's will. (*Parah Adumah, 3:4*)

The Questions:

1. Rambam is a legal code, why is the number of past red heifers relevant to this legal discussion? It seemingly belongs in historical accounts.
2. Why does he add that “the tenth will be brought by the Moshiach,” a detail which is not found in the Mishnah which is Rambam’s source (*Parah 3:5*)?

3. Why does he include a prayer, “may he speedily be revealed?” Again, a legal code is not the place for a prayer. And if there is some justification for including a prayer, shouldn’t it appear in laws of the Messianic era, at the end of the Rambam’s work?

The Explanation:

Rambam offers this account of the previous red heifers at the heels of the following law:

The ashes were divided into three portions: one was placed in the chayl, one on the Mount of Olives, and one was divided among all the priestly watches...

And the one that was placed in the chayl was prepared and hidden away, as implied by the verse which states: "It will be a security for the congregation of Israel." This teaches that it was put away for safekeeping.

Indeed, in the *chayl*, they would put away for safekeeping a portion of the ashes from every red heifer that was burnt."

Thus, according to Rambam, the function of the red heifer was not only to provide

available ashes to use for the purification ritual, it was also to simply reside eternally with the Jewish people. There was a separate command to always have a “portion of the ashes put away for safekeeping.”

Therefore, Rambam enumerates the chronology of past red heifers, to underscore how this commandment to “safeguard” was always practiced. He then adds that Moshiach will bring the tenth red heifer, since the mitzvah of the red heifer is incomplete as long as we don’t have the presence of its ashes stored as a safekeeping. This is why he continues “may he speedily be revealed,” since the mitzvah of the red heifer demands its completion with the coming of Moshiach. The longer that Moshiach tarries, the longer the red heifer’s ashes are not being eternally safeguarded.

A deeper explanation as to why Rambam includes this prayer here is related to his ruling about the yearning one must have for

Moshaich. Rambam writes that a person must not only believe in the eventuality of Moshiach’s coming, he must also constantly wait and yearn for his coming. This means that we must always be attentive to Moshiach’s absence, and whenever we encounter a situation where that absence is apparent, it should evoke in us a desire for Moshiach.

When a person thinks and prays for Moshiach in a seemingly unrelated discussion, they reveal how they are preoccupied with Moshiach’s coming.

Thus, Rambam includes this prayer here to illustrate the legal expectations for how one must yearn for Moshiach — when discussing a topic not related to Moshiach, the number of red heifers offered through history, we immediately think about the one Moshiach will offer, and instinctively petition G-d to usher in the redemption, “may he speedily be revealed. Amen, so may it be G-d's will.”
