

Chukas: Moshe and the Parah Adumah - A Unique Association



Based on the teachings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson
From the Sichos in English Collection

The Torah portion of *Chukas* begins with G-d saying to Moshe:¹ “Speak to the Jewish people and have them bring you a *parah adumah temimah*, a completely red cow....”

Our Sages note² that G-d insisted that the *parah adumah* be brought to Moshe because “all the *parah adumos* shall cease, but yours shall remain forever.” This was of great import to all subsequent *parah adumos*, for the priests who made the future *parah adumos* all sanctified themselves from the ashes of Moshe’s *parah adumah*.³ This is why all *parah adumos* are known by Moshe’s name.⁴

This unique relationship is also stressed in the explanation for the commandment of *parah adumah*: Only to Moshe did G-d reveal the divine rationale behind *parah adumah* — “to you I shall reveal the reason of *parah adumah*.”⁵

Why is there such a special relationship between the *parah adumah* and Moshe?

The *parah adumah* brought about atonement for the sin of the Golden Calf.⁶ The commentators explain⁷ the connection between atonement for the sin of the Golden Calf and purification from the impurity that comes from contact with the dead (the simple reason for the *parah adumah*) thus:

Were it not for the sin of the Golden Calf, the Jewish people would have been freed from death.⁸ For at the time the Torah was given, the Jews were freed from death.⁹ It was only because of the sin of the Golden Calf that the nation again became subject to dying.¹⁰ Thus, the sin of the Golden calf was a cause of death, and hence also of the impurity that results from death.

This, then, is the connection between atonement for the sin of the Golden Calf and purification from the defilement that comes from contact with the dead.

According to the above, we can better understand the statement of the *Rambam*¹¹ that “nine *parah adumos* were made from the time they were given this command until the destruction of the second *Beis HaMikdash*. The first was made by Moshe ... the tenth will be made by King Moshiach.”

Why does the *Rambam* find it necessary to number the *parah adumos* offered throughout the generations? Moreover, why does he single out the tenth from all the other offerings found in the prophecy of *Yechezkel*¹² and specify that it will be made by King *Moshiach*?

The *Rambam* is hinting at the fact that complete purification brought about through the *parah adumah* will only come about through Moshiach; only then will complete atonement have been granted for the sin of the Golden Calf.¹³

At the time of *Moshiach*, and only then, will there be complete purification from the impurity that results from contact with death. For at that time death will cease, as the verse states¹⁴ with regard to that period: “Death will be swallowed up forever.”¹⁵

This is alluded to in the *Rambam*'s statement that "the *tenth* will be made by King *Moshiach*," for the number 10¹⁶ is a sign of fulfillment and completion, and the completed state of purification brought about by the *parah adumah* will only be realized with the *parah adumah* offered by *Moshiach*.

In light of the above, we also understand the unique relationship between the *parah adumah* and Moshe:

The fundamental action of the *parah adumah* is not the negation of impurity, but the negation of its very cause — death. This requires Moshe's power, for we find that only "Moshe's handiwork is eternal,"¹⁷ and "Moshe did not die ... just as in the past he served, now as well..."¹⁸

Therefore the ability of all subsequent *parah adumos* to purify depended on the ashes of Moshe's, for the ultimate power of the *parah adumah*'s purification (freedom from death, or eternal life) is connected with Moshe's eternity.

Based on *Likkutei Sichos*, Vol. XXXIII, pp. 127-129.

Likkutei Sichot - Vol. 33: (א) חוקת

Lubavitcher Rebbe

Parshah

Chukat

FOOTNOTES

1. *Bamidbar* 19:2.
2. *Tanchuma*, *Chukas* 8; *Bamidbar Rabbah* 19:6. See also *Rashi*, *Yoma* 4a.
3. See *Parah* 3:5 and in *Mishnah Achronah*, *ibid*. See also commentary of *Maharzav* to *Bamidbar Rabbah*, *ibid.*; *Shaloh*, *Cheilek Torah Shebichsav*, p. 359b.
4. *Shaloh*, *ibid.*, fn. 3; *Biurei MaHarai* and *Sifsei Chachamim* on *Rashi*, *Chukas* *ibid*.
5. *Tanchuma* and *Bamidbar Rabbah*, *ibid*.
6. *Tanchuma*, *ibid.*, and *Bamidbar Rabbah* 19:8. See also *Tosafos*, *Moed Katan* 28a, s.v., *Mi*.
7. *Klei Yakar*, *Alshich*, *Shach Al HaTorah*, *Eitz HaDaas Tov* (from the *Rachav*), *et al*.
8. *Shmos Rabbah* 32:1; *Zohar*, Vol. I, p. 37b, 131b.
9. See *Shabbos* 146a.
10. See *Zohar*, Vol. I, p. 52b, 126b, Vol. II, p. 193b.
11. *Hilchos Parah Adumah*, conclusion of chapter 3.
12. 45:17ff. See also *Rambam*, *Hilchos Maaseh HaKorbanos* end of ch. 2.
13. See *Shmos* 32:34 and commentary of *Rashi*; *Sanhedrin* 102a.
14. *Yeshayahu* 25:8.
15. See *Mishnah* conclusion of *Yoma*; *Zohar*, Vol. I, p. 115a. See also *Sefer HaMaamarim* 5628, p. 40ff.; *Sefer HaMaamarim Melukat*, Vol. II, p. 277ff.; *Or HaTorah LeNach* p. 523ff.; *Or HaTorah*, *Chukas* end of p. 809.
16. See *Iben Ezra*, *Shmos* 3:15; *Pardes*, *Shaar* II.
17. See *Sotah* 9a; *Tana Dvei Eliyahu Rabbah*, ch. 18; *Tzafnas Paneach* beginning of Torah portion *Terumah*.
18. *Sotah* 13b; *Zohar*, Vol. I, 37b ff.

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