



As the Sha'ar HaNun of Kedushah the Parah Adumah Purifies Yisrael from Amalek the Sha'ar HaNun of Tumah

The upcoming, auspicious Shabbas Kodesh is known as **Shabbas Parah**. This indicates that in addition to reading the parshas hashavua, parshas Vayakheil, we will add the passage about the mitzvah of the Parah Adumah as the Maftir. This is based on the teaching in the Mishnah (Megillah 29a): **ראש חודש אדר שחל להיות בשבת קורין בפרשת שקלים... בשניה זכור, בשלישית יחזיקו חמור, ברביעית החודש הזה לכם. If Rosh Chodesh Adar falls on Shabbas, we read parshas Shekalim on that Shabbas . . . On the second Shabbas (of Adar), we read Zachor; on the third, the passage of the Parah Adumah; on the fourth, "hachodesh hazeh lachem."**

Rashi explains that we read about the "parah adumah" to encourage Yisrael to purify themselves, so that the korban Pesach will be prepared and consumed in a state of purity—"taharah." Then, on the fourth Shabbas, we read "hachodesh hazeh lachem," which is the passage related to the korban Pesach. Rashi adds in the name of the Yerushalmi (Megillah 3, 5): **Rabbi Chama states that to be chronologically correct, we should actually read the passage of HaChodesh prior to the passage concerning the Parah, since the Mishkan was erected on the first day of Nissan, while the "Parah Adumah" was burnt on the second day of Nissan. So why do we read the parsha of the Parah first? Because it describes the process by which all of Yisrael were purified.**

In truth, the answer of the Yerushalmi requires clarification. Undoubtedly, the purification of Yisrael in preparation for offering the korban Pesach is more relevant to the month of Nissan. So, it is still unclear why Chazal placed parshas Parah ahead of parshas HaChodesh. Furthermore, if the purification

of Yisrael is such a priority, why don't we read parshas Parah as the first of the four parshiyos?

Additionally, it behooves us to examine a unique aspect of the mitzvah of the Parah Adumah that we do not find with regards to any other mitzvah in the Torah. It states in parshas Chukas (Bamidbar 19, 2): **זאת חוקת התורה אשר צוה ה' לאמר, דבר: אל בני ישראל ויקחו אליך פרה אדומה תמימה. This is the "chukah" (statute) of the Torah, which Hashem has commanded, saying: Speak to Bnei Yisrael, and they shall take to you a completely red cow, which is without blemish. Our sages expounded in the Midrash (Bamidbar Rabbah 19, 6): Rabbi Yossi the son of Rabbi Chanina said: HKB"H said to Moshe, "I am revealing the rationale for the Parah to you, but to all others, it is a "chukah" (an incomprehensible statute without an obvious rationale). These issues deserve further explanation. What is so unique about this mitzvah that HKB"H only revealed its secret to Moshe Rabeinu?**

Yisrael Required Purification from the Filth that Stuck to Them as a Result of the Skirmish with Amalek

We will begin to shed some light on the subject by introducing a teaching from the esteemed Rabbi of Apta, zy"a, the author of the Ohev Yisrael. He explains why Chazal instituted parshas Parah immediately after Purim. His explanation is brought down by the esteemed Rabbi Leibel Eiger of Lublin, zy"a, in Toras emes (Purim 5632):

"איתא מהרב הקדוש איש אלקים ממעז'יבעז' [הרה"ק מאפטא], שלאחר מחיית עמלק נצרך הטהרה, כי מזה שנתאבק עם ההיפוך, הגם שמנצחו

ומכניעו עם כל זה נדבק איזה שמץ, ולזה צריכין להיטהר בפרשת פרה אחר הפורים." He asserts that after eradicating Amalek, purification is necessary. For, when Yisrael fights its diametric opposite, even though we defeat and subdue them, nevertheless, the interaction sullies and tarnishes us to some degree. Hence, we must purify ourselves with parshas Parah after Purim.

It is apparent that the esteemed Rabbi of Apta, zy"a, is teaching us a valuable, fundamental principle regarding the service of Hashem. This is relevant to any Jew assisting someone who has gone astray to perform teshuvah. Aside from taking great care to avoid any negative influence or spiritual corruption from the interaction, one must also purify oneself afterwards. For, even the broom used to sweep away dirt becomes dirty. This principle is based on a holy tradition going all the way back to the holy Ba'al Shem Tov, zy"a, and is presented in the Ma'or V'Shemesh (Shemini). He says that he heard it from Rabbi Elimelech of Lizhensk, ztz"l, who repeated it in the name of the Maggid of Mezritsch, who heard it from the Ba'al Shem Tov.

In other words, the Apter Rav is teaching us that just as HKB"H performed miracles to help our ancestors defeat Haman and his cohorts who descended from Amalek; in similar fashion, HKB"H assists us annually on Purim to defeat Amalek and its guardian angel, the yetzer hara, who combats us all year long. Therefore, after dealing with this enemy on Purim, we require the purification of the Parah to cleanse us and cure us of the poison the yetzer hara has exposed us to.

In fact, we learn this same lesson from the mitzvah of the Parah Adumah itself. On the one hand, it purifies the impure; on the other hand, it contaminates those who participate in the process. As it is written (ibid. 19, 21): **"ומזה מי הנידה יכבס: and the one who sprinkles the water of the sprinkling shall immerse his clothing, and one who touches water of sprinkling shall be impure until evening.** This is precisely what we have learned in the Mishnah (Parah 4, 4): **"כל העסוקין בפרה מתחלה ועד סוף מטמאין: כגדים—all those involved in the process of the Parah, from beginning to end, render clothing ritually impure.**

The take-home message is that anyone who cleanses others of their tumah must cleanse himself afterwards of the tarnish

of the tumah that might have clung to them. This concurs fantastically with the explanation of the Apter Rav presented above—that Chazal juxtaposed parshas Parah to Purim, since the mitzvah of the Parah Adumah possesses the unique capacity to cleanse us of the residual spiritual stench and dirt that the battle with Amalek on Purim exposed us to.

Amalek's Ministering Angel is the Yetzer HaRa It Exhausts Us with Its Incessant Forays

It gives me great pleasure to elaborate on this vital concept taught by the esteemed Rabbi of Apta, zy"a. To do so, we will introduce an illuminating insight from the impeccable teachings of the Sefas Emes (Purim 5646). He analyzes the fact that Mordechai along with the sages of the Sanhedrin in that generation agreed to establish the festival of Purim in unwalled settlements on the fourteenth of Adar and in walled settlements on the fifteenth of Adar. This is curious because the fighting with their enemies—Amalek—was actually over on those days; the Jews in those respective locations actually rested on those days. Here are the pertinent pesukim (Esther 9, 20):

"ויכתוב מרדכי את הדברים האלה וישלח ספרים אל כל היהודים אשר בכל מדינות המלך אחשורוש הקרובים והרחוקים, לקיים עליהם להיות עושים את יום ארבעה עשר לחודש אדר ואת יום חמשה עשר בו בכל שנה ושנה, כימים אשר נחו בהם היהודים מאויביהם והחודש אשר נהפך להם מיגון לשמחה ומאכל ליום טוב, לעשות אותם ימי משתה ושמחה ומשלוח מנות איש לרעהו ומתנות לאביונים."

Mordechai recorded these events and sent letters to all the Jews who were in all the provinces of King Achashveirosh, the near ones and the distant ones, to accept upon themselves the annual observance of the fourteenth day of the month of Adar and its fifteenth day, as the days on which the Jews gained relief from their enemies, and the month which had been turned about for them from one of sorrow to gladness, and from mourning to festival; to observe them as days of feasting and gladness, and sending delicacies to one another, and gifts to the poor.

At first glance, this is extremely surprising and incomprehensible. What prompted them to establish the

celebration of Purim on two days on which no miracles occurred and the Jews had already rested from the battle? Shouldn't Purim be celebrated on the two days that the Jews actually battled their enemies—namely, the thirteenth of Adar in the unwalled settlements and the fourteenth of Adar in the walled settlements? Those were the days on which HKB"H performed a miracle to help Yisrael decimate the descendants of Amalek.

To explain the matter, the Sefas Emes refers to a teaching in the Gemara (Succah 52a): **”יצרו של אדם מתגבר עליו בכל יום, שנאמר—רק רע כל היום—a man’s yetzer overwhelms him every day, as it states (Bereishis 6, 5): “Was only for evil all day long.”** Additionally, we are taught (ibid. 52b): **”יצרו של אדם מתגבר עליו בכל יום ומבקש להמיתו, שנאמר צופה רשע לצדיק ומבקש להמיתו, ואלמלא הקב”ה שעוזר לו אינו יכול לו, שנאמר ה' לא יעזבנו בידו ולא ירשיענו בהישפטו.”** **A man’s yetzer overwhelms him daily and attempts to kill him, as it states (Tehillim 37, 32): “The wicked one watches for the tzaddik and seeks to kill him.”** And if not for HKB"H, **Who aids him, he would be unable to withstand it, as it says (ibid. 33): “Hashem will not forsake him to his hand, nor let him be condemned when he is judged.”**

Let us explain this based on a fundamental reality of war. The rest periods of soldiers engaged in war is inseparable from the war itself. For, even great heroes who fight like brave, mighty lions require periodic rest periods to replenish and renew their strength and energy to continue fighting. This is how HKB"H created man; man requires rest to replenish his strengths. Without rest, a soldier will become fatigued and will likely fall in the course of battle.

With this understanding, we can comprehend the strategy employed by the yetzer hara, who harasses us and overwhelms us on a daily basis with new challenges and conflicts. In the words of Rabbi Yitzchak: **“A man’s yetzer overwhelms him every day.”** Alternatively, according to the version that appears elsewhere in the Gemara (Kiddushin 30b): **”יצרו של אדם מתחדש עליו בכל יום—a man’s yetzer renews its efforts against him every day.”** For, even if it sees that it failed to trap a person once or twice, i.e., the person remained steadfast and refused to be swayed; nevertheless, the yetzer is relentless, it continues to assail him daily with new ploys. It knows that if it continues to attack a person ceaselessly,

eventually the person will become exhausted and will fall into its trap; after all, he is only human.

Draw the Yetzer into the Beis HaMidrash

This begs the question: Since Chazal attest to the fact that the yetzer hara tirelessly increases its efforts and rallies anew on a daily basis with new strategies to exhaust a Jew and trap him, what should someone do who is incapable of remaining vigilant and sustaining this constant battle against the yetzer?

It appears to me that Chazal themselves provide us with an explicit answer to this troublesome question. Above, we presented the statement of Chazal that **“a man’s yetzer overwhelms him every day.”** Immediately afterwards, they advise the following: **”תנא דבי רבי ישמעאל, אם פגע כך מנוול זה משכהו לבית המדרש, אם אכן הוא נימוח, אם ברזל הוא מתפוצץ.”** **A Baraisa was taught in the Academy of Rabbi Yishmael: If this despicable character engages you, draw him into the Beis Midrash. If he is like a stone, he will dissolve; if he is like iron, he will shatter.**

It is evident from this explicit advice that the Academy of Rabbi Yishmael is informing us not only how to thwart the yetzer hara but also how a Jew can find refuge and respite from the constant struggle with the yetzer. This will enable him to replenish his strength and capacity to combat the yetzer hara even after leaving the Beis Midrash to pursue his mundane activities, such as earning a livelihood.

This explains why they depict the yetzer hara as a **“despicable character.”** It is because it is relentless in its efforts to cause a Jew to stumble; and even if it fails at first, because the Jew exhausts all of his energy to fight back and withstand its negative influence, the yetzer seeks new tricks and strategies to continue its assault against him. Ultimately, the Jew will tire and fail. Hence, the Academy of Rabbi Yishmael suggested the following wonderful advice: **“Draw him into the Beis Midrash. If he is like a stone, he will dissolve; if he is like iron, he will shatter.”** Due to the presence of Torah and the kedushah of the Beis Midrash, the yetzer hara becomes powerless and cannot continue its assault. Thus, the Jew is able to study Torah with peace of mind.

On the Day that the Jews Rested from the Battle with Amalek They Upheld and Accepted the Torah with Ahavah

This now illuminates for us the wonderful insight of the Sefas Emes as to why Mordechai and the other sages of the Sanhedrin established the celebration of Purim on the days that Yisrael rested from fighting their enemies. Those days are an essential, inseparable part of “mechias Amalek.” For, as explained, part of Amalek’s battle plan is to prevent Yisrael from resting. Thus, the true victory over Amalek is accomplished when we succeed in finding “menuchah”—rest and peace of mind—from the battles with them by clinging to Hashem’s Torah.

Hence, it is important to note that Chazal teach us that on Purim Yisrael accepted the Torah with “ahavah”—affection and devotion. This is taught in the Gemara (Shabbas 88a) in relation to the passuk (Shemos 19, 17):

“וַיִּתְּצֵבּוּ בְּתַחֲתֵית הָהָר, אָמַר רַב אֲבָדִימִי בַר חָמָא בַר חָסָא, מִלְּמַד שְׁכַפָּה הַקֵּב”ה עֲלֵיהֶם אֶת הָהָר כְּגִיגִית וְאָמַר לָהֶם, אִם אַתֶּם מִקְבְּלִים הַתּוֹרָה מִזֶּה, וְאִם לֹא שֵׁם תִּהְיֶה קְבוּרַתְכֶם... אָמַר רַבָּא אֵף עַל פִּי כֵן הָדוּר קִבְלוּהָ בִּימֵי אַחֲשֵׁרֶשׁ, “**And they stood under the mountain.**” Rav Avdimi bar Chama bar Chasa said: This teaches that HKB”H held the mountain over them like an upturned barrel. Then He said to them: “If you accept the Torah, fine; but if not, your burial will be there.” . . . Rava said: Nevertheless, they accepted it during the times of Achashverosh, as it is written (Esther 9, 27): “The Jews fulfilled and accepted”—they fulfilled that which they had already accepted.

Based on what we have discussed, we can suggest that the Jews in the unwallled settlements, who were victorious on the thirteenth of Adar, fulfilled and accepted the Torah with “ahavah” on the day after the fighting was completed—on the fourteenth of Adar—in appreciation of the miracle. By accepting the Torah in this manner, they finally found a respite from the war with Amalek. In Shushan, however, the battle continued for one more day; so, they claimed victory over their enemies on the fourteenth of Adar. Thus, they fulfilled and accepted the Torah with “ahavah” on the following day—the fifteenth of Adar. With the power of the kedushah of the

Torah, that is when they found a respite from the war with Amalek. This is why the two days of Purim were established on the days that the Jews rested from their battles with this enemy. On the day each accepted the Torah with “ahavah” respectively, they finally rested from the war with Amalek in the sense of (Bereishis 49, 15): “וַיֵּרָא מְנוּחָה כִּי טוֹב”—**and he saw a resting place, that it was good.**

Nevertheless, even after the day of rest from the war with Amalek, our blessed sages still found it necessary to institute Shabbas Parah to purify Yisrael immediately after the days of Purim. As the great Rabbi of Apta, zy”a, explained, this was meant to cleanse Yisrael from the spiritual filth and tarnish that clings to them in every single generation as a result of the difficult battle with Amalek, who is the yetzer hara.

Amalek Is Associated with the Sha’ar HaNun of Tumah

Following this path, we will now explain the deeper implication of the teaching of the great Apter Rav, zy”a. How exactly does the “chukah” of the Parah purify us from the filth and tarnish that adheres to us as a result of the interaction with Amalek on Purim? Let us examine the skirmish with Amalek shortly after “yetzias Mitzrayim” (Devarim 25, 17): “זָכוֹר אֶת אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה לָךְ עַמְלֶק בְּדֶרֶךְ בְּצֵאתְכֶם מִמִּצְרַיִם”—**remember what Amalek did to you while you were departing from Egypt.** Now, in Shiras HaYam it states emphatically that all the nations were deathly afraid of Yisrael at that time (Shemos 15, 15): “אִזּוֹ נִבְהָלוּ אֱלֹהֵי אֲדָוָה אֵילֵי מוֹאָב יֵאָחֲזֻמוּ רַעַד נִמּוּגוּ כָל”—**“then the chieftains of Edom were confounded, trembling gripped the powers of Moab, all the inhabitants of Canaan dissolved.** So, how did Amalek dare to approach and attack Yisrael without trepidation?

To answer this conundrum, we will introduce what the brilliant Rabbi of Sanz, zy”a, writes in Divrei Chaim (end of Emor): Amalek encompasses all fifty gates of tumah. We can suggest that this is the “remez” inherent in the passuk (Bamidbar 24, 20): “רֵאשִׁית גּוֹיִם עַמְלֶק וְאַחֲרֵיתוֹ עַדִּי אוֹבֵד”—**Amalek is the first among nations, but its end will be eternal destruction.** Since the klipah of Amalek is the “sha’ar hanun” of tumah, this qualifies Amalek as **“the first among nations.”** It is the leader and source of all the forces of tumah. **“But**

its end will be eternal destruction,” since its ultimate and complete elimination will not occur until the end of days, when the “sha’ar hanun” of kedushah will be revealed.

Now, we are familiar with a concept that appears in the siddur of the Arizal, Siddur Rabbi Shabtai (Haggadah shel Pesach), explaining the passuk (Shemos 12, 39): **“ולא יכלו”**—**“להתמהמה”**—**and they could not delay.** He explains that during galus Mitzrayim, Yisrael sank to the forty-ninth level of tumah. Had they delayed and remained there even one moment longer, they would have sunk to the “sha’ar hanun”—the fiftieth level of tumah. Then, they would never have left Mitzrayim.

The Shela hakadosh explains why sinking to the “sha’ar hanun” of tumah would have made it impossible for Yisrael to ever leave Mitzrayim based on a teaching in the Gemara (R.H. 21b): **“חמישים שערי בינה נבראו בעולם וכולן ניתנו למשה חסר אחד שנאמר ותחסרהו מעט מאלקים”**—**fifty levels of “binah” were created in the universe, and they were all bestowed upon Moshe except for one, as it is stated (Tehillim 8, 6): “Yet You have made him only a little less than the divine.”** In other words, Moshe Rabeinu was not granted access to the fiftieth level of “binah.”

We can now comprehend the malicious plan the wicked Amalek. They understood that Yisrael departed Mitzrayim prematurely to prevent them from sinking to the “sha’ar hanun” of tumah. For, in that event, Moshe—who did not possess the “sha’ar hanun” of kedushah—would not have been able to redeem them. Hence, Amalek figured that since it was the “sha’ar hanun” of tumah, as implied by the depiction **“ראשית”**—**“גוים עמלק,”** it was capable of confronting Yisrael and defeating them—despite Moshe’s incredible accomplishments.

This then is the allusion in the passuk: **“זכור את אשר עשה לך”**—**“עמלק בדרך בצאתכם במצרים”**, whose gematria is “nun” (50), alluding to the fifty “sha’arei binah.” It schemed to overpower Yisrael by means of the “sha’ar hanun” of tumah as **“they were departing Mitzrayim.”** As explained, they figured that since Yisrael were forced to depart Mitzrayim prematurely, so that they would not sink to the “sha’ar hanun” of tumah; it could defeat them, since it was the “sha’ar hanun” of tumah.

The Top of the Hill Alludes to the Sha’ar HaNun of Kedushah

Continuing on our sacred journey, we will now explain the difficult task that Moshe Rabeinu faced—going to war with Amalek. The Torah tells us that Moshe instructed Yehoshua (Shemos 17, 9): **“בחר לנו אנשים וצא הלחם בעמלק, מחר אנכי נצב על”**—**“choose men for us, and go out to do battle with Amalek; tomorrow I will stand on top of the hill with the staff of G-d in my hand.** Why did Moshe exert himself to stand on top of the hill? Based on this discussion, we can suggest that Moshe Rabeinu perceived via his incredible kedushah that in order to combat Amalek, it would be necessary for him to elevate his “madreigah” to the “sha’ar hanun” of kedushah at least temporarily.

This is the implication of his statement: **“Tomorrow I will stand on top of the hill.”** This also explains why (ibid. 12): **“וידו משה כבדים”**—**Moshe’s arms grew heavy.** It was difficult for him to rise to the “sha’ar hanun”—a level that he had not achieved previously. Therefore, he required the assistance of two tzaddikim: **“And Aharon and Chur supported his hands, one on this side and one on that side.”** With their help, he managed to rise above his actual “madreigah” and achieve the “sha’ar hanun.”

To explain how Moshe Rabeinu accomplished this superhuman feat, let us refer to HKB”H’s statement (Yeshayah 51, 4): **“כי תורה מאתי תצא”**—**for Torah will come forth from Me.** They expounded on this passuk in the Midrash (V.R. 13, 3): **HKB”H said: “A new Torah will come forth from Me”—novel aspects (chiddushim) of the Torah will come forth from Me.** Our sacred sefarim teach us that this refers to the “sha’ar hanun” that has not yet been revealed to the world but will only be revealed le’asid la’vo. In order to combat Amalek, however, Moshe Rabeinu climbed to the **“top of the hill.”** Thanks to his incredible kedushah, he drew the “sha’ar hanun” from the future geulah. This enabled Yisrael to overcome the “sha’ar hanun” of tumah—the klipah of Amalek.

The Parah Adumah Is the Sha’ar HaNun of Kedushah

Proceeding along this sublime path, we will explain how the Parah Adumah cleanses us and rids us of the spiritual

filth and tarnish that adheres to us from the klipah of Amalek. Here are the pertinent passages from the Torah and the Midrash, which we cited above: **"This is the 'chukah' of the Torah, which Hashem has commanded, saying: Speak to Bnei Yisrael, and they shall take to you a completely red cow, which is without blemish."** Our sages expounded in the Midrash: **Rabbi Yossi the son of Rabbi Chanina said: HKB"H said to Moshe, "I am revealing the rationale for the Parah to you, but to all others, it is a "chukah" (an incomprehensible statute without an obvious rationale).**

In his commentary on the Midrash Rabbah (Chukas 19, 2), the Yidei Moshe writes: **The fiftieth "sha'ar" is the secret of the Parah Adumah, and it is called the "sha'ar" of mystery. This "sha'ar" was not revealed to anyone except Moshe, as it is stated: "I am revealing it to you, but to all others, it is a 'chukah."** The Yitav Lev (Chukas) is perplexed by this statement, since it contradicts the explicit teaching in the Gemara above: **"Fifty levels of 'binah' were created in the universe, and they were all bestowed upon Moshe except for one."** So, how can he claim that the Parah Adumah represents the "sha'ar hanun," which is called the "sha'ar of mystery," and it was revealed only to Moshe Rabeinu?

I believe that we can reconcile the claim of the Yidei Moshe based on what we have already explained. To conduct the war against Amalek, Moshe ascended to the top of the hill to access the "sha'ar hanun" from the future geulah, in keeping with the interpretation of: **"תורה חדשה מאתי תצא"**. Therefore, "midah k'neged midah," he was privileged to learn the secret of the Parah Adumah associated with the "sha'ar hanun." It affords Yisrael purification annually after the miraculous victory over Amalek on Purim. As we learned from the esteemed Apter Rav, zy"a, that encounter leaves a residual dirtiness and taint on us.

At this point, we can better appreciate the profound words of the Apter Rav. Our blessed sages juxtaposed parshas Parah with Purim, because Jews require spiritual cleansing and purification from the evil taint that remains with us after combatting Amalek on Purim. We have learned that Amalek is the embodiment of the "sha'ar hanun" of the klipah, as implied by the phrase: **"ראשית גוים עמלק"**. Therefore, after confronting Amalek on Purim, we must cleanse ourselves of the evil taint of the "sha'ar hanun" of tumah. We accomplish this by reading parshas Parah—the "sha'ar hanun" of kedushah—which HKB"H is destined to reveal to us at the time of the future geulah—swiftly, in our times! Amen.



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