



PhiloTorah D'var Torah

The Para Aduma - Eigel haZahav (mis)connection?

Rashi in the beginning of Parshat Chukat does something unusual. We find 'regular' Rashi with various words and phrases commented on. This is how we see Rashi on the Chumash, throughout.

But then, Rashi says that the above was explanations based on understanding the words and understanding the halacha.

He then adds, Midrash Aggada I have copied based on the understanding of Rabbi Moshe HaDarshan. (He was a contemporary of Rashi, perhaps older than Rashi - both from France.)

What follows is a series of connections between the Para Aduma and the golden calf.

Have them take for you - from their own possessions, just as the people took their gold jewelry and gave it for the EIGEL, so too they take of their own and give towards the Para Aduma.

Para Aduma - This can be compared to the son of a maidservant who soiled the king's palace. They said, "Let his mother come and clean up the mess." Similarly,

let the cow come and atone for the calf.

T'mima (blemish-free) - Just as the Israelites, who were perfect, but became blemished. Let this come and atone for them so that they regain their perfection

That a yoke (or any burden) has not been placed on the cow - Just as they cast off from themselves the yoke of Heaven.

Elazar HaKohen - just as they assembled against Aharon, who was a kohen, to make the calf, but because Aharon made the calf, this service was not performed through him, for the prosecution cannot serve as the defense (rather is son atones for the father as the mother cow atones for her son, the calf).

Burn the cow - as the calf was burned.

As a keepsake - Just as the transgression of the calf is preserved throughout the generations for retribution, for there is no reckoning [punishment] which does not include a reckoning for the calf, as it says, "But on the day I make an accounting [of sins upon them], I will bring their sin to account..." (Sh'mot 32:34).

Just as the calf defiled all those who were involved in it, so does the cow render unclean all those involved with it.

And just as they were cleansed through its ashes, as it says, "[he] scattered [the ashes of the burned calf] upon the surface of the water", so [with the cow], "They shall take for that unclean person from the ashes of the burnt purification offering..."

This midrash makes a very strong case for the connection between the Para Aduma and the Eigel HaZahav, and that the Para Aduma is a KAPARA (atonement) for the sin of the golden calf.

Very solid multi-point connection.

Except for one 'small' thing.

The use of the Para Aduma Potion is to purify one who became defiled (TAMEI) from contact with a dead body. It is not a sin to be TAMEI. In fact, sometimes it is a great mitzva. And purification from a state of impurity is not the same as atonement for sin.

So, is this really a misconnection?

The answer is most definitely, NO!

Let's look at things this way. If the body is the receptacle of the person's soul during his lifetime, or the partner of his soul - if you prefer to see it that way, then when the soul leaves the body, the body should simply be viewed as having fulfilled its task in the world and should be respectfully discarded by burial, having been created in the image of G-d. But not more than that. Why is the dead body considered AVI AVOT HATUM'A - the greatest source of impurity?

The answer is - SIN. There is a famous mashal (parable) about a king who had a beautiful daughter who fell in love with a common peasant. And he with her. They wanted to be married. Rather than try to break them apart (or maybe failing to break up their romance), the king met

with the peasant and warned him that he had better treat his daughter like the princess that she was, and like like the wife of a common peasant.

HKBH warns the body - so to speak - that it had better treat the soul in it with the highest degree of spirituality - via a life of Torah and Mitzvot. And that it should not sin, which is a betrayal of the body's charge to treat the soul properly.

It is sin that causes a dead body to be TAMEI. And so, it is the double-function of the Para Aduma Potion, to both purify the defiled AND to (partially) atone for the Sin of the Golden Calf in particular, but for all sin, in general. **PTDT**