



Presidents might put the past behind them, but is that the Jewish way? In this week's Parsha we come across the enigmatic law of the Red Heifer which is deemed to atone (partially) for the Sin of the Golden Calf. That might explain why this command was addressed not only to Moshe but also to Aharon who had played a central role in that catastrophic event.

But the red heifer would never atone completely for that national failing. After that event, and following Moshe's plea on behalf of the people, Hashem declares: "On the day that I make my account, I shall bring their sin to account against them" (Sh'mot 32:34). And what has been that account: the destruction of the Batei Mikdash, dispersion, persecutions?

The proclamation at the Yad Vashem memorial reminds us that a people that does not recall its past will not learn the lessons for the future. Thus Israel beckons us and visiting nobility to recall the past horrors inflicted upon the Jewish people.

Likewise, through the ashes of the red heifer, Hashem motions us to recall our misdeeds and to search for the Tikun,

the process of repair that will hasten our redemption.

The ashes of the Holocaust, perhaps, remind us of the ashes of the Red Heifer. Perhaps they serve as atonement, if not complete, then at least partial, so that all of mankind that has become contaminated through death can, with Hashem's help, become purified in the days to come to celebrate life and peace and unity. **MP**