

Shvilei Pinches Parshas Poroh

Rabbi Pinches Friedman

Parshas Poroh Adumoh 5771

Translation by Dr. Baruch Fox

The Amazing Connection between: “I Am but Dust and Ash” to the Dust and Ash of the Red Heifer

This upcoming Shabbos Kodesh is referred to auspiciously as “Shabbos Poroh.” This designation is in keeping with the Maftir we will read this Shabbos pertaining to the laws of the Red Heifer. We have learned in the Mishnah (Megillah 29): “ראש חודש אדר שחל להיות בשבת קורין בפרשת שקלים...” —the order of the four special parshiyot associated with the month of Adar is Shekolim, Zachor, Poroh and HaChodesh. Rashi points out in the name of the Yerushalmi (Megillah 3,5) that in truth, to be historically accurate, Shabbos HaChodesh should precede Shabbos Poroh; the Mishkan was erected on the first day of Nissan, Rosh Chodesh, and the Red Heifer was burnt on the following day, the second of Nissan.

Hence, it is only fitting that we examine the mitzvah of the Poroh Adumoh, the Red Heifer, which appears in parshas Chukas (Bamidbar 19,2):

“זאת חוקת התורה אשר צוה ה' לאמר, דבר אל בני ישראל ויקחו אליך פרה אדמה תמימה אשר אין בה מום אשר לא עלה עליה עול... ושרף את הפרה לעיניו את עורה ואת בשרה ואת דמה על פרשה ישרוף... ולקחו לטמא מעפר שרפת החטאת ונתן עליו מים חיים אל כלי”

This is the statute of the Torah, which Hashem has commanded, saying: Speak to the Children of Yisroel, and they shall take to you a completely red cow, which is without blemish, and upon which a yoke has not come. . . Someone shall burn the cow before his eyes—its hide, and its flesh, and its blood, with its dung, shall he burn. . . They shall take for the contaminated person some of the dust (ashes) of the burning of the purification animal, and put upon it spring water in a vessel.

While it is true that Rashi comments: “זאת חוקת התורה, לפי שהשטן ואומות העולם מונין את ישראל לומר, מה המצוה הזאת ומה טעם יש בה, לפיכך כתב בה חקה, גזירה היא מלפניו אין לך רשות להרהר—This is the statute of the Torah, because the Accuser (Satan) and the nations of the world ridicule Yisroel by saying, “What is this commandment?” and “What reason is there to it?”; therefore it is described in the Scriptures as a “statute,”; “It is a decree from before Me which you do not have the right to question.” Nevertheless, Rashi, himself, suggests a reason for the Poroh Adumoh, in the name of Rabbi Moshe HaDarshan, that it served as atonement for the sin of the “egel” (ibid. 22):

“ויקחו אליך, משלהם, כשם שהם פרק נזמי הזהב לעגל משלהם, כך יביאו זו לכפרה משלהם. פרה אדומה, משל לבן שפחה שטינף פלטיץ של מלך, אמרו תבוא אמו ותקנח בצואה, כך תבוא פרה ותכפר על העגל. אדומה, על שם (ישעיה א יח) אם יאדימו כתולע, שהחטא קרוי אדום. תמימה, על שם ישראל שהיו תמימים ונעשו בו בעלי מומין, תבוא זו ותכפר עליהם ויחזרו לתמותם. לא עלה עליה עול, כשם שפרקו מעליהם עול שמים.”

Shvilei Pinches Parshas Poroh

Rashi compares the situation to the son of a maidservant who soiled the palace of a king. They said, "Let his mother come and wipe away the excrement." Similarly, let the cow come and atone for the "egel." It had to be perfect, symbolic of Yisroel before the sin of the "egel"; let it atone for them, correcting their blemished state and returning them to their state of perfection. It must never have experienced a yoke symbolizing the fact that Yisroel shirked the yoke of Heaven.

When Rashi states: "אין לך רשות להרהר אחריה"—you do not have the right to question this statute—he means that one cannot believe that one fully understands the purpose of the Red Heifer and, as a consequence, conclude that this mitzvah is not applicable in certain circumstances. One must believe wholeheartedly that this statute is beyond human comprehension—what we refer to as a "chok"—but that one is certainly permitted and even obligated to ponder the deeper significance and purpose of the mitzvos, as the earlier and later sages did—nevertheless realizing that one is barely scratching the surface of the matter.

"They Shall Take for the Impure Person Some of the Dust "

Let us begin our discussion concerning the Poroh by introducing a fascinating statement by our blessed sages. Avraham Avinu's descendants were given the Poroh Adumoh as atonement in the merit of Avraham's declaration to HKB"H (Bereishis 18,27): "הנה נא הואלתי לדבר אל אדוני ואנכי עפר ואפר"—**Behold, now, I have begun to speak to my Lord although I am but dust and ash.** Concerning the Poroh Adumoh the two terms "dust" and "ash" are also mentioned. Here is the text of the Midrash (B.R. 49,11):

"ויען אברהם ויאמר הנה נא הואלתי, אמר אלו הרגני אמרפל לא הייתי עפר? ואי שרפני נמרוד לא הייתי אפר? אמר לו הקב"ה, חייך אתה אמרת ואנכי עפר ואפר, חייך שאני נותן לבניך כפרה בהם, שנאמר (במדבר יט יז) ולקחו לטמא מעפר שרפת החטאת, (שם שם ט) ואסף איש טהור את אפר הפרה."

This dialogue takes place while Avraham attempts to intercede on behalf of the people of Sedom. He says: If I had been killed by Amrafel, would I not have been dust? And had I been burnt by Nimrod, would I not have become ash? HKB"H replies: By your life, for declaring that you are mere dust and ash, your children will receive atonement by means of dust and ash.

When the Midrash states that HKB"H says to Avraham, regarding the Poroh Adumoh: "חייך שאני נותן -- **By your life, I will give your children atonement through them**—it appears that the Midrash is referring to Rashi's comment, in the name of Rabbi Moshe HaDarshan, that the Poroh Adumoh atones for the sin of the "egel." Consequently, if we wish to gain even the slightest understanding of the purpose of the Poroh Adumoh, we must first delve into the meaning of Avrohom's declaration: "ואנכי עפר ואפר"—**I am but dust and ash.** Thus, we will understand how atonement by means of the Poroh Adumoh—concerning which dust and ash are also mentioned--represents a fitting reward, measure for measure, for Avraham's declaration.

We must explain: (a) what is the connection between Avraham's declaration and the Poroh Adumoh? (b) Additionally, the fact that the Torah mentions dust with regards to the Poroh requires explanation; burning the Red Heifer creates ash not dust. So, why does the possuk say: "ולקחו לטמא מעפר שריפת

Shvilei Pinches Parshas Poroh

“החטאת—they shall take for the contaminated person some of the dust of the burning of the purification animal?”

HKB”H Himself Kneaded Man’s Body from Dust and Water

I would like to propose my own solution to this puzzle. We find in the Torah that due to Adam HaRishon’s sin involving the Tree of Knowledge, HKB”H sentenced mankind to die, as it is written (Bereishis 2,17): “ומעץ הדעת טוב ורע לא תאכל ממנו כי ביום אכלך ממנו מות תמות” —of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Bad, you must not eat thereof; for on the day you eat of it, you shall surely die. After Adam HaRishon did indeed eat from the Tree of Knowledge, HKB”H explains the reason for the decree (Bereishis 3,19): “בזעת אפיך תאכל לחם עד שובך אל האדמה כי ממנה לקחת, כי עפר אתה ואל” —by the sweat of your brow shall you eat bread until you return to the ground, from which you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust shall you return.

At first glance, one might wonder what is the chiddush of the reason given by HKB”H: “כי עפר אתה ואל” —for you are dust, and to dust shall you return? Even before the sin, the reality was that man was created from the earth, from dust. Nevertheless, had he not sinned, he would not have died. So, what changed as a result of the sin necessitating that man must die?

Now, concerning the creation of man, it is written (ibid. 2,7): “ויוצר ה’ אלקים את האדם עפר מן האדמה” —and Hashem G-d formed the man of soil from the earth, and blew into his nostrils the soul of life; and man became a living soul. Rashi explains: “נטל” —G-d took the soil used to create man from the place about which it is said, “An Altar of earth you shall make for Me,” as if to day, “Would that it (the earth of the Altar) be atonement for him, and that he be able to last!”

Prior to forming man’s body, HKB”H watered the entire face of the earth, so that He could knead man’s body from dust mixed with water, as it is written (ibid. 6): “וואר יעלה מן הארץ והשקה את כל פני” —a mist ascended from the earth and watered the whole surface of the soil. We learn from Rashi: “לענין ברייתו של אדם, העלה התהום והשקה עננים לשרות העפר, ונברא אדם כגבל זה שנותן” —in order to form man, HKB”H raised water from the depths of the earth and filled the clouds with water with which to saturate the soil; thus, man was created like one who first puts water into flour before kneading the dough.

We should be struck with awe and fear upon realizing how much sanctity went into man’s body; it was shaped, as it were, by HKB”H Himself from earth that was taken from the place of the Altar. Clearly, HKB”H did so with the intent that man’s body serve as a holy vessel, ready and waiting to receive the light of the neshomeh—a portion from G-d above. Therefore, it states immediately: “ויופח באפיו נשמת” —and He blew into his nostrils the soul of life; and man became a living soul.

Shvilei Pinches Parshas Poroh

"Back and Front You Have Restricted Me and You Have Laid Your Hand upon Me"

Dovid HaMelech—who was given seventy years of life from Adam HaRishon—praises HKB"H for this phenomenon as follows (Tehillim 139,5): **"אחור וקדם צרתני ותשת עלי כפכה"**—**back and front You have restricted me, and You have laid Your hand upon me.** In other words, You, HKB"H, have formed my body by placing your two hands upon me; for You have kneaded Adam HaRishon's body out of dirt and water. Therefore, the human body possesses tremendous sanctity and it behooves us to guard it and protect it from injury, chas v'shalom.

We can embellish this idea that HKB"H kneaded man's body from the dust of the earth mixed with water, in sanctity and purity, based on the following Midrash (B.R. 14,1): **"אדם הראשון שהיה גמר חלתו"**—**Adam HaRishon represented the final stage in the preparation of the world's "challah."** The Ohr HaChaim hakadosh explains that before Adam HaRishon was created all the vegetation of the earth was prohibited for consumption—until the portion of "challah" was set aside. Challah was the small portion of dough that was separated and given to the kohanim permitting the rest of the dough and bread to be consumed.

To remedy this situation: **"וואר יעלה מן הארץ והשקה את כל פני האדמה"**-- **a mist ascended from the earth and watered the whole surface of the soil.** This preparation allowed the "challah" to be separated from the flour, the dust of the earth, after it had been kneaded with water. Immediately afterwards: **"ויוצר ה' אלקים את האדם עפר מן האדמה"**-- **and Hashem G-d formed the man of soil from the earth**—HKB"H shaped man's body from the dust of the earth; **"ויפח באפיו נשמת חיים ויהי האדם לנפש"**—**and blew into his nostrils the soul of life; and man became a living soul**—thus, He separated Adam HaRishon as the world's portion of "challah," permitting all of the earth's vegetation for consumption.

This explains nicely why HKB"H, so to speak, kneaded man's body Himself from the dust of the earth. Since it represented the "challah" portion of the world, its sanctity needed to be insured and protected as the laws of "challah" dictate. As we find in Scriptures (Yirmiyah 2,3): **"קודש ישראל לה' ראשית—Yisroel is holy to Hashem, the first of His crop; all who devour it will be held guilty; evil shall come upon them—the word of Hashem.** After all, they are considered like "challah," which is permitted only to the kohanim and is prohibited to everyone else.

The Purpose of Burial Is to Purify the Contamination of the Serpent

We can now explore why—if not for the sin of the Tree of Knowledge—Adam HaRishon would have lived forever. The human body—which HKB"H kneaded by Himself—is linked to the neshomeh—a portion of G-d from above—by a divine connection which is eternal. Therefore, had Adam protected that connection, he never would have died.

Shvilei Pinches Parshas Poroh

Yet, from the very moment that Adam and Chava were persuaded to follow the serpent's advice--rebelling against Hashem by partaking of the forbidden fruit--the serpent succeeded in contaminating the sanctity of their bodies with filth and impurity. This led HKB"H to decree the death sentence upon mankind, so that the body would be buried in the earth; its burial would serve to nullify the body's contamination in the dust of the earth which is the serpent's source of nourishment. In Taamei HaMitzvos, the Arizal explains the matter as follows (Parshas Vayechi Mitzvas Kevurah): **”סוד קבורת מת... צריך שיכוונו הקוברים, שתתעכל כל אותה הזוהמא שנתערבה בנפשו בחטא אדם הראשון, שתתעכל בקרקע וישאר נקי”**—the secret of burying the dead is that those performing the burial have in mind that the filth and contamination that was introduced into the body by the sin of Adam HaRishon be absorbed into the ground leaving the person clean and pure.

The purpose of burial is indeed to eliminate the contamination of the serpent into the soil, but there is one very important proviso. Man must do everything within his power while alive to purify himself and rid himself of the serpent's filth and contamination; then, the earth can complete the process for him. If the person, however, failed to fulfill his obligation while alive or, possibly even aggravated the situation, by contaminating and defiling his body even further with sins and transgressions, in this case, the earth is unable to eliminate the body's contamination. This situation can only be remedied by the powerful purification process involving the fire and torment of gehinom.

Now, we can begin to appreciate HKB"H's rationale for decreeing death upon mankind after the sin of the Tree of Knowledge: **”כי עפר אתה ואל עפר תשוב”**-- **for you are dust, and to dust shall you return.** HKB"H is conveying the fact that He formed Adam's body from a holy, handful of dust from the site of the Altar, so that he would be a holy vessel ready to receive and contain the light of the neshomeh eternally. Unfortunately, by transgressing the word of Hashem and partaking of the Tree of Knowledge, he defiled the body with the serpent's filth and contamination. As a consequence, **”to dust shall you return”**—the body must become pure dust of the earth once again, as it was before the sin; this is only possible through death and burial—so that the serpent's venom and contamination can be reabsorbed into the earth.

Avraham Avinu Burned the Serpent's Contamination in the Fiery Furnace

Continuing along this path of enlightenment, let us now address Avraham Avinu's statement to HKB"H (Bereishis 18,27): **”הנה נא הואלתי לדבר אל אדוני ואנכי עפר ואפר”**-- **Behold, now, I have begun to speak to my Lord although I am but dust and ash.** Rashi comments: **”ואנכי עפר ואפר, כבר הייתי ראוי להיות עפר על ידי המלכים ואפר על ידי נמרוד, לולי רחמיך אשר עמדה לי”**—**I was already fit to become dust through the kings and ash through Nimrod, were it not for Your mercy which stood on my behalf.** Let us endeavor to understand why Avraham specifically chose these two descriptions—**”dust and ash.”**

We can begin to explain the matter based on a lesson learned from the Zohar hakadosh (Behar 111:). Avraham Avinu corrected the sin of Adam HaRishon which possessed a taint of avodah zarah, idol-worship. For, when Adam and Chava were enticed the serpent, he persuaded them with the following

Shvilei Pinches Parshas Poroh

words (Bereishis 3,5): **כי יודע אלקים כי ביום אכלכם ממנו ונפקחו עיניכם והייתם כאלקים יודעי טוב ורע—for G-d knows that on the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened and you will be like G-d, knowing good from bad.** Surely, there is no greater blasphemy for a mere human of flesh and blood than to imagine that he can be like the Almighty.

To make amends for Adam HaRishon's sin of avodah zarah, Avraham Avinu broke all of his father Terach's idols and he spread the name and praise of Hashem throughout the world, as it is written (Bereishis 21,33): **“ויטע אשל בבאר שבע ויקרא שם בשם ה' א"ל עולם”—he planted an “eshel” in Beer Sheva, and there he proclaimed the Name of Hashem, G-d of the Universe.** Now, we know that an avodah zarah must be burned in fire (Devarim 7,25): **“פסילי אלהיהם תשרפון באש”—the carved images of their gods you shall burn in the fire.** Therefore, Avraham took it upon himself to fulfill this directive by agreeing to sacrifice his life through burning in the fiery furnace in order to glorify and sanctify Hashem's name.

Based on the writings of the Yearos Devash (Part 1, Drush 14), we can take this explanation a step further:

“אבל תדע כי קודם חטא אדם הראשון, לא היה שום אוכל צריך אפייה ובישול, כדאמרינן (שבת ל:): לעתיד לבוא תוציא ארץ גלוסקאות. והטעם כי אין מגרש ארס של נחש כי אם האש, כי ארס נחש שרשו יסוד העפר ונחש עפר לחמו, והאש תכלית רחוקה מעפר, זה למטה מטה וזה למעלה מעלה, ולכך אש מגרשת ארסו של נחש. לכך אמרו בשר צלי אין בו משום גילוי, כי כאשר האש שולטת אין ארס נחש כלל... ולכך בהסית עץ הדעת ובחטאו, על כל רוב מאכלו נמשך ארס של נחש, בזה האופן שאין ראוי להאכילו עד הגישו אל האש, ואז מגורש הארס וראוי לאכילה.”

He teaches us that prior to Adam HaRishon's sin food did not require baking or cooking. For, only fire is able to eliminate and dispel the snake's venom. The venom arises from the dust of the earth which is the snake's food and nourishment. Fire serves a very different and distant (opposite) purpose than does dust; whereas dust is very low; fire is very high; hence, fire dispels the snake's venom. As a result of the sin of the Tree of Knowledge, most of man's food is tainted by the snake's venom; this taint must be eliminated by fire, before it is safe for consumption.

This is why Avraham Avinu, a reincarnation of Adam HaRishon, required burning in the furnace—in order to eliminate by means of fire the snake's venom and the taint of idolatry introduced into Adam HaRishon by the enticement: **“והייתם כאלקים יודעי טוב ורע”— and you will be like G-d, knowing good from bad.** This virtual burning served to rid his body of the serpent's defilement, and he returned to the state of Adam at the time of creation—a pure handful of dust from the place of the Altar.

“I Am but Dust and Ash”

Purification of the Dust by Means of the Ash

Now, we can begin to comprehend Avraham's message conveyed to HKB”H by the words: **עפר ויאנכי עפר—I am but dust and ash.** In other words, I rectified the handful of dust so that it would be untainted as it was before the sin of the Tree of Knowledge by incinerating the serpent's filth and contamination to ashes in Nimrod's fiery furnace. It turns out that these two things, “dust and ash,” are

Shvilei Pinches Parshas Poroh

intimately related. By first incinerating the serpent's contamination in the body to ashes, man remains with a pure handful of dust--as he was at the time of his creation.

As an added benefit, we can suggest a reason as to why Avraham made this statement specifically while intervening on behalf of the people of Sedom. We have learned from the Arizal (Shaar Hapesukim Parshas Shemos) that the souls of the people of Sedom were part of Adam HaRishon when he partook of the Tree of Knowledge; they reincarnated into the generation of the flood where they also failed miserably and went astray; their second reincarnation was into the generation of the dispersion where they went astray again; then they reincarnated for a third time into the people of Sedom, failing dismally one more time.

With this in mind, we can suggest a reason why Avraham was willing to put himself on the line for the people of Sedom. He was a reincarnation of Adam HaRishon, who wrongfully ate from the Tree of Knowledge. Since the souls of the people of Sedom were contained within Adam HaRishon at the time of the sin, he felt personally responsible to help remedy their neshamos.

Therefore, he asked Hashem's forgiveness for having the audacity to intercede on behalf of the people of Sedom: **"ויען אברהם ויאמר הנה נא הואלתי לדבר אל אדוני"**—**Avraham responded and said, "Behold, now, I have begun to speak to my Lord."** The reason that I am praying on their behalf: **"וּאֲנִי עָפָר וְאֵפֶר"**—**I am but dust and ash**—because I am a reincarnation of Adam HaRishon who committed a transgression of avodah zarah; that is why I was obligated to purify the handful of dust by burning the serpent's defilement to ashes. For the very same reason, I feel it necessary to try and help the people of Sedom, whose first failure occurred while they were part of Adam HaRishon when he partook of the Tree of Knowledge.

The Dust of the Burning of the Purification Animal and the Ashes of the Poroh

Progressing even further along this path of enlightenment, let us now focus on the words of the Midrash: **"אמר לו הקב"ה, חייך אתה אמרת ואנכי עפר ואפר, חייך שאני נותן לבניך כפרה בהם, שנאמר: "ולקחו לטמא מעפר שרפת החטאת, ואסף איש טהור את אפר הפרה"**—**HKB" H responded to Avraham: "By your life, you said, 'I am but dust and ash,' by your life, I will give your children atonement through them—as it says: 'They shall take for the contaminated person some of the dust of the burning of the purification animal,' and 'A pure man shall gather the ash of the Poroh.'"**

We have learned in the Gemarah (Shabbos 146.) that when Yisroel approached Har Sinai the effects of the serpent's defilement ceased and they returned to the status of Adam HaRishon before the sin; however, after the sin of the "egel," the spiritual defilement returned. Along these lines, the Gemarah teaches (Avodah Zarah 5.): **"לא קיבלו ישראל את התורה אלא כרי שלא יהא מלאך המות שולט בהן, שנאמר (תהלים פב ו) אני אמרתי אלהים אתם ובני עליון כולכם, חבלתם מעשיכם אכן כאדם תמותון"**—**Yisroel only accepted the Torah so that the angel of death should not prevail over them . . . however, you have corrupted your deeds (referring to the sin of the "egel") and therefore, "but like men you shall die."**

Shvilei Pinches Parshas Poroh

So we see that the sin of the “egel” paralleled the sin of the Tree of Knowledge in several aspects: (a) Due to the sin of the Tree of Knowledge Adam HaRishon’s body was defiled and, as a result, death was decreed upon him and all of creation; similarly, due to the sin of the “egel,” the contamination and defilement of the serpent returned and the reality of death was reinstated as a means to purify mankind of the serpent’s defilement. (b) Both sins involved avodah zarah. We learned that concerning the sin of the Tree of Knowledge, Adam and Chava were enticed by the possibility of divine knowledge: **“והייתם”** **“כאלקים יודעי טוב ורע”**—**and you will be like G-d, knowing good and bad**—which constituted a form of avodah zarah. Concerning the sin of the “egel,” they proclaimed (Shemos 32,4): **“אלה אלהיך”** **“ישאל”**—**This is your god, O Yisroel**. To atone for the sin of the “egel,” which was a form of avodah zarah, it became necessary to incinerate the filth and contamination of the serpent that had returned—this was necessary to purify and sanctify the handful of dust used by HKB”H to create man.

The Dust and Spring Water of the Poroh Correspond to the Dust and Water Used to Form the Body

Now, we can suggest that is also the rationale behind the pure Red Heifer, the Poroh Adumoh. As we learned from Rabbi Moshe HaDarshan, the Poroh alludes to Yisroel: **“תמימה, על שם ישראל שהיו”** **“תמימים ונעשו בו בעלי מומין, תבוא זו ותכפר עליהם ויחזרו לתמותם”**—it had to be perfect, without a blemish, so that it could atone for Yisroel and restore their blemish-free state. By burning the Poroh to ash, Bnei Yisroel were to have in mind that they themselves deserved to be burnt to sanctify the Name of Hashem. By burning out the effects of the serpent which returned to man’s body due to the sin of the “egel,” a handful of dust and water will remain constituting a pure and untainted body.

This provides us with a very nice explanation as to why the possuk employs the word **“עפר”**, dust, instead of **“אפר”**, ash: **“ולקחו לטמא מעפר שריפת החטאת ונתן עליו מים חיים אל כלי”**—**they shall take for the contaminated person some of the dust of the burning of the purification animal, and put upon it spring water in a vessel**. It is alluding to us that the purpose of burning the Poroh to ash is to eliminate the contamination in man’s body from the serpent, so that the body that was formed out of dust and water will remain pure and untainted.

Thus, we can interpret the possuk: **“ולקחו לטמא מעפר שריפת החטאת”**—they shall specifically take from the purified dust that remains after the animal has been burnt, i.e. after the filth and contamination due to the sin have been burnt to ash; **“ונתן עליו מים חיים אל כלי”**—it is necessary to mix the dust with spring water just like HKB”H kneaded dust of the earth with water to form man’s body, forming a service vessel to house the neshomeh. It turns out that the Poroh Adumoh procedure represents a symbolic gesture for the creation of man’s body by HKB”H in sanctity and purity.

Alas, we can rejoice having unraveled our sages riddle and having revealed the deeper message conveyed by our sages in the Midrash: **“אמר לו הקב”ה, חייך אתה אמרת ואנכי עפר ואפר, חייך שאני”** **“נותן לבניך כפרה בהם, שנאמר ולקחו לטמא מעפר שרפת החטאת, ואסף איש טהור את אפר הפרה”**. Based on what we have learned, Avraham Avinu’s statement--“I am but dust and ash”—and the Poroh Adumoh procedure are intimately related. Just as Avraham Avinu strived his entire life to purify the handful of dust that constitutes the body, the Poroh Adumoh accomplishes the same goal. In the merit

Shvilei Pinches Parshas Poroh

of Avraham's willingness to sacrifice his life in the fiery furnace, HKB"H provided his descendants—after the sin of the "egel" and the return of the serpent's filth and defilement—atonement via the Poroh Adumoh, concerning which the Torah also mentions the terms "dust" and "ash."

In truth, even after the atonement of the Poroh Adumoh the correction is not complete. For, the reality is that the decree of death will remain in force until the future to come. Nevertheless, it is blatantly clear that the ashes of the Red Heifer afforded Yisroel a very high level of purity akin to that enjoyed by Avraham Avinu as a result of his self-sacrifice demonstrated by his statement: "ואנכי עפר ואפר"—**am but dust and ash**. Both represent the ultimate correction that will be realized at the time of the future redemption, when the handful of dust that is the human body will be completely purified, as a result the death sentence on mankind will be permanently repealed, and the dead will come back to life for all eternity—swiftly, in our days, Amen.