

The Shela HaKadosh's Exalted Explanation

The Connection between the Three Parshiyos: Vayakhel, Pekudei and Parah -- habbas, Mishkan and Parah All Atone for the Cheit HaEigel

This upcoming Shabbas Kodesh is referred to as “Shabbas Parah,” signifying that in addition to reading the weekly parshiyos of Vayakhel and Pekudei, we also read for Maftir the passage related to the “Red Heifer” — the “Parah Adumah.” As we have learned in the Mishnah (Megillah 29a): **“ראש חודש אדר שחל להיות בשבת קורין בפרשת שקלים... בשניה זכור, בשלישית פרה אדומה, ברביעית החודש הזה לכם”** -- the order of the four special parshiyos associated with the month of Adar is Shekalim, Zachor, Parah and HaChodesh.

Rashi explains: **“פרה אדומה, להזהיר את ישראל לטהר, שיעשו”** — we are instructed to read about the “Parah Adumah” as a reminder to purify ourselves; it is essential that we prepare and consume the Pesach offering in a state of purity — “taharah.” Hence, we read the passage concerning the Parah prior to the passage of HaChodesh, which concerns the Pesach offering.

Rashi goes on to add in the name of the Yerushalmi (Megillah 25b): **“אמר רבי חמא, בדין הוא שיקדום החודש לפרשת פרה, שהרי באחד בניסן הוקם המשכן ושני לו נשרפה הפרה, ומפני מה הקדימוה שהיא טהרתן של ישראל”** — Rabbi Chama states that to be chronologically correct, we should really read the passage of HaChodesh prior to the passage concerning the Parah; for, the Mishkan was erected on the first day of Nissan, Rosh Chodesh Nissan, while the “Red Heifer” was burnt on the second day of Nissan. Nevertheless, it was instituted to read the passage concerning the Parah first, because it describes the process by which Yisrael are able to purify themselves.

Hence, it is fitting that we begin our discussion with the words of the Shela hakadosh (Drush for Vayakheil-Pekudei) that establish the common thread connecting the readings of these three parshiyos — parshas Vayakheil, parshas Pekudei and parshas Parah. Incredibly, all three join together to provide atonement for the “cheit ha’eigel.” How so? In parshas Vayakheil, we learn about the mitzvah of Shabbas (Shemos 35, 1):

“ויקהל משה את כל עדת בני ישראל ויאמר אליהם אלה הדברים אשר צוה ה' לעשות אותם, ששת ימים תיעשה מלאכה וביום השביעי יהיה לכם קודש שבת שבתון לה' כל העושה בו מלאכה יומת”

— And Moshe assembled the entire assembly of Bnei Yisrael and said to them: “These are the things that Hashem commanded, to do them: ‘For a period of six days, work may be done, but the seventh day shall be holy for you, a day of complete rest for Hashem; whoever does work on it shall be put to death.’”

As we have learned in the Gemara, Shabbas observance acts to atone for the “cheit ha’eigel” (Shabbas 118b): **“כל המשמר -- שבת כהלכתו אפילו עובד עבודה זרה כדור אנוש מוחלין לו”** — anyone who observes Shabbas with all of its halachot, is forgiven even for the serious transgression of idolatry. The Beit Yosef (OC 242) explains why this is so. Avodah zarah, idolatry, constitutes heresy — a denial of Hashem; conversely, Shabbas-observance is an affirmation of our emunah in Hashem. Therefore, it is evident why observing Shabbas -- demonstrating our strong emunah that Hashem created the world in six days and rested on the seventh day — serves as atonement for the act of idolatry associated with the “cheit ha’eigel.”

Next, let us proceed to parshas Pekudei. There we learn about the Mishkan (Shemos 38, 21): **“אלה פקודי המשכן משכן העדות -- אשר פקד על פי משה עבודת הלויים ביד איתמר בן אהרן הכהן”** — These are the accountings of the Mishkan, the Mishkan of Testimony, which were counted at the word of Moshe; the work of the Leviim in the hand of Itamar, the son of Aharon HaKohen. As the following Midrash explains, the Mishkan also provided atonement for the “cheit ha’eigel” (S.R. 51, 8):

“אלה פקודי המשכן משכן העדות - אמר הקב"ה, יבוא זהב המשכן ויכפר על זהב העגל, אמר הקב"ה לישראל, בשעה שעשיתם את העגל הכעסתם אותי באלה אלהיך (שמות לב-ד), עכשיו שעשיתם המשכן, באלה אני מתרצה לכם, הוי אלה פקודי המשכן”

— HKB”H said: Let the gold of the Mishkan come and atone for the gold of the “eigel.” HKB”H said to Yisrael: When you made the “eigel,” you angered me using the word “eileh” (אלה אלקיך ישראל); now that you built the Mishkan, I will forgive you by means of the word “eileh” (אלה פקודי המשכן).

Similarly, parshas Parah describes another method of atonement for the “cheit ha’eigel.” Let us refer to Rashi’s comment in the name of Rabbi Moshe HaDarshan (Bamidbar 19, 22): **“פרה אדומה, משל לכן שפחה שטינה פלטין של מלך, אמרו תבוא אמו”** — Rabbi Moshe hadarshan 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 “eigel.”

Thus, we have established an amazing connection between the three parshiyos that we will read on this coming Shabbas which approaches auspiciously. They all involve methods of atonement for the “cheit ha’eigel.” This concludes his sacred idea.

It is important to note at this point that these three methods of atonement for the “cheit ha’eigel” are relevant to us in each and every generation. For, HKB”H tells Moshe in the aftermath of the “cheit ha’eigel” (Shemos 32, 34): **“וביום פקדי ופקדתי עליהם”** — **on a day that I make an accounting, I shall bring their sin to account against them.** Rashi comments: **“תמיד כשאפקוד עליהם עוונותיהם, ופקדתי עליהם מעט מן העוון הזה עם שאר העוונות, — always, whenever I shall make an accounting of Yisrael’s sins against them, I will hold them accountable to some small degree for this sin along with the other sins; there is no punishment that comes upon Yisrael which does not have in it some retribution for the sin of the eigel.”**

This being the case — that in every generation, we are held accountable for the “cheit ha’eigel” along with all of our other transgressions — we also need to atone for the “cheit ha’eigel” along with our other current transgressions. Therefore, when we read these three parshiyos this Shabbas — Vayakheil, Pekudei and Parah — we should have in mind that we want these three methods to atone for us for the “cheit ha’eigel.”

Three Forms of Atonement Representing עשׂן — עולם שנה נפש

Like a loyal servant grasping onto his master’s coattails, I would like to add a small embellishment to the idea of the

Shela hakadosh regarding these three methods of atonement for the “cheit ha’eigel” — Shabbas, the Mishkan and the Parah Adumah. I would like to refer to a concept explained at length by the Arvei Nachal (Bereishis Drush 1) taken from the Sefer Yetzirah (3, 5). According to the Sefer Yetzirah, HKB”H created the world in three dimensions: **עולם, שנה, נפש — “olam,” “shanah” and “nefesh.”**

Let us explain. **“עולם”** refers to the physical space and location on this planet. Tosafot (Pesachim 94a) explain that the earth can be divided up into three parts — one third bodies of water, one third desert and one third inhabited areas. **“שנה”** refers to the dimension of time composed of seconds, minutes, hours, days and years. **“נפש”** refers to living creatures including animals and human beings; the elite among them is the people of Yisrael, who accepted upon themselves the yoke of Torah and service of Hashem.

Upon careful analysis, we find that all events can necessarily be defined in terms of these three interrelated parameters: **“olam,” “shanah” and “nefesh.”** For, any act must necessarily have been performed in a certain location — the element of **“עולם”**; similarly, it must have been performed by a particular person or group of people — the element of **“נפש”**; thirdly, it must have occurred at a particular time — the element of **“שנה”**.

Accordingly, the Raavad writes (Introduction to Sefer Yetzirah): **“וצריך אתה לדעת כי כל ספר יצירה יתפרש על ג’ דרכים, אחד מהם בעולם, ב’ בשנה, ג’ בנפש, וסימנם (שמות יט-יח) וחר סיני עשׂן כולו, [עשׂן — you should know that all of Sefer Yetzirah can be interpreted in terms of three parameters; one is “olam”; the second is “shanah”; the third is “nefesh.” They are represented by the mnemonic עשׂן, which is an abbreviation for עולם שנה נפש. They are alluded to in the passuk (Shemos 19, 18): “Har Sinai was consumed in smoke (עשׂן).”**

Now, the opening passuk of the Torah states explicitly (Bereishis 1, 1): **“בראשית ברא אלקים את השמים ואת הארץ”**. Rashi comments that the passuk is teaching us that G-d created the heavens and the earth for the sake of the Torah and for the sake of Yisrael — both of whom are referred to as **“reishis.”** As a consequence, every Jew must serve Hashem in these three dimensions. This prompts the Arvei Nachal to write (ibid.): **“לכן מוטל עלינו בכל דברי התורה להביט כל אחד כפי שכלו, איך — therefore it is incumbent upon us, regarding every bit of Torah, for each person according to his intellectual ability, to see how it relates to the elements of “olam, shanah and nefesh.”**

So, when they sinned with the “eigel,” they created defects in these three parameters: **עולם, שנה, נפש**. The sin was committed in the midbar — “olam”; it occurred on the seventeenth of Tamuz — “shanah”; it was committed by the people participating in the regrettable act, the “cheit ha’eigel” — “nefesh.” Viewed in this light, we can suggest that the three methods of atonement for the “cheit ha’eigel” — **Mishkan, Shabbas and Parah** — atone correspondingly for the three parameters of **“olam, shanah and nefesh.”**

“משכן”: The place where HKB”H rests His Shechinah, atones for the aspect of “עולם”. “שבת”: The seventh day, a unit of time, atones for the aspect of “שנה”. “פרה אדומה”: The Red Heifer provides atonement for Yisrael for the aspect of “נפש”. As the Ramban explains (Vayikra 1, 9), the korbanos afford a person atonement; he should imagine that everything being done to the sacrificial animal should have been done to him. Here are his actual words: **“כדי שיחשוב אדם בעשותו כל אלה, כי חטא לאלקיו בגופו ובנפשו, וראוי לו שישפך דמו וישרף גופו, לולא חסד הבורא שלקח ממנו תמורה, וכיפר הקרבן שיהא דמו תחת דמו נפש תחת נפש”** — when performing each step of the sacrificial process, a person should have in mind that he sinned to his G-d in body and soul; consequently, his blood should have been spilled and his body burned; it is only due to the Creator’s kindness that He accepted a substitute in his place; in this manner, the korban provides atonement — its blood in place of his blood, its life in place of his life.

A Royal Decree to Demonstrate the Path of Teshuvah to the People

It is the nature of Torah to be expounded in seventy different ways — from seventy different perspectives. As such, I was struck by a wonderful idea to explain by means of “drush” why HKB”H chose these three methods of atonement for the “cheit ha’eigel”: **שבת, משכן, פרה אדומה** — which are mentioned in the three parshiyos which we read this Shabbas: **פרה, פקודי, ויקהל**. First, let us address HKB”H’s statement: **“וביום בקדי ופקדתי עליהם”** — **and the day I make an accounting, I shall bring their sin to account against them.** As we learned from Rashi, this passuk teaches us that every sin committed contains a small element of the “cheit ha’eigel.” It behooves us to explain the connection between the “cheit ha’eigel” and all subsequent transgressions.

It appears that we can provide an explanation based on a revelation from Chazal. They teach us that the “cheit ha’eigel” was in actuality a decree from the Heavenly King — “gezeirat

hamelech” — designed to demonstrate the process of teshuvah to the general populace. We have learned in the Gemara (A.Z. 4b): **“אמר רבי יהושע בן לוי, לא עשו ישראל את העגל אלא ליתן פתחון פה”**. **Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi said: Yisrael only made the “eigel” in order to provide encouragement for “ba’alei teshuvah.”** Rashi provides the following clarification: **“כלומר גיבורים ושליטים ביצרים היו, ולא היה ראוי להתגבר יצרים עליהן, אלא גזירת מלך היתה לשלוט בהם, כדי ליתן פתחון פה לבעלי תשובה”** — in other words, Yisrael, in that generation, were courageous and virtuous and ruled over their inclinations. They would not have succumbed to their inclinations and made the “eigel,” if not for a Heavenly decree designed to provide encouragement for ba’alei teshuvah.

This explains very nicely why HKB”H said: **“וביום בקדי ופקדתי עליהם חטאתם”**. Seeing as the “cheit ha’eigel” was intended solely for the purpose of demonstrating the path of teshuvah, it turns out that whenever Yisrael sin, the “cheit ha’eigel” is awakened either in a positive sense or a negative sense. If they perform teshuvah for their transgressions -- because they learned from the “cheit ha’eigel” that HKB”H accepts them back as a result of their teshuvah -- then not only are they afforded atonement for their current transgressions, but the “cheit ha’eigel” is completely erased. For, they have demonstrated that the “cheit ha’eigel” was not for naught; Hashem’s will has been fulfilled; the path of teshuvah has been demonstrated for the masses.

If, however, Yisrael fail to perform teshuvah for their transgressions, they deserve punishment for the “cheit ha’eigel,” as well. Seeing as they didn’t learn from the “cheit ha’eigel” the benefit of doing teshuvah, it served no purpose for HKB”H to orchestrate their downfall regarding the matter of the “eigel.” Therefore, **“וביום בקדי”** — when HKB”H accounts for the transgressions for which they neglected to perform teshuvah; **“ופקדתי עליהם את חטאתם”** — He also takes into account and metes out punishment for the “cheit ha’eigel,” from which they failed to learn the lesson of teshuvah.

Now, there is a well-known principle regarding teshuvah that we learn from the great gaon Chida, ztz”l. He explains in Rosh David (Emor) why teshuvah is effective for Yisrael but not for goyim. For, the Gemara states (Kiddushin 32a): **“האב שמחל על”** — **כבוד - כבודו מחול** — a father is permitted to forego his honor. Seeing as HKB”H is Yisrael’s father and we are His children, He is permitted to forego His honor and accept our teshuvah. With respect to the goyim, however, HKB”H is a king, as it is written in Tehillim (47, 9): **“מלך אלקים על גוים”** — **G — d reigns as King**

over the nations (goyim). Concerning this latter situation, the Gemara teaches (Kiddushin 32b): **“מלך שמחל על כבודו אין כבודו — even if a king renounces his honor, it is not renounced. Therefore, it is inappropriate to accept their acts of teshuvah.**

Shabbas Mishkan and Parah Are Proof that Yisrael Are Considered G-d's Children

Continuing onward and upward along this exalted path, let us proceed to explain why HKB”H chose these three methods of atonement for the **“cheit ha’eigel”**: **שבת, משכן, פרה**. These three entities prove convincingly that Yisrael are G-d's children — **“banim laMakom.”** As such, we are obligated to perform teshuvah for all of our transgressions. After all, HKB”H accepts our teshuvah as a father, possessing the ability to renounce his honor. In this manner, we also achieve atonement for the **“cheit ha’eigel,”** which was orchestrated by divine decree to demonstrate the power of teshuvah.

We begin with parshas Vayakheil which mentions the mitzvah of Shabbas. We learn from the gaon Chida in Rosh David (ibid.) the reason the Gemara states (Sanhedrin 58b): **“בן נח ששבת חייב — an idolater (Noahide) who observes the Sabbath is liable to death.** For, Shabbas is the King's scepter; on Shabbas, HKB”H rested from all the work that He had performed, as it is written (Bereishis 2, 2): **“וישבות ביום השביעי מכל מלאכתו אשר — and He abstained on the seventh day from all His work which He had done.** And we follow the established law (Sanhedrin 22a) that a person who utilizes the king's scepter is subject to death as a rebel against the sovereignty.

Yisrael have the status of being G-d's children, as it is written: **“אתם בנים ואני אביכם” — you are children to Hashem, your G-d.** Therefore, they were given the mitzvah of Shabbas, because they are permitted to use their father's, HKB”H's, scepter. The goyim, on the other hand, have the status of slaves, with HKB”H being their king, as it states: **“מלך אלקים על גוים” — G-d reigns as King over the goyim (nations).** Due to their status, they are prohibited from using the king's scepter. Consequently, a Noahide or an idolater who observes the Shabbas is liable to death in keeping with law pertaining to a person who rebels against the king.

Furthermore, our holy sources teach us that Shabbas is a time for teshuvah. An allusion to this fact is presented in Sidduro shel Shabbas; the word **שבת** is an acronym for **שבת תשובה** — indicating that Shabbas is a time to repent. We can suggest that this is the allusion contained in our parsha, parshas

Vayakheil (Shemos 35, 2): **“ששת ימים תעשה מלאכה וביום השביעי יהיה — for a period of six days, work may be done, but the seventh day shall be holy for you, a day of complete rest for Hashem.** We must abstain from work on Shabbas so that we will be free to search our souls and perform a form of self-accounting — **“cheshbon hanefesh.”** Thus, we can make amends for all the damage we caused, **chas v'shalom,** during the previous six weekdays. As explained, an intimate relationship exists between teshuvah and Shabbas Kodesh. For, we learn from Shabbas that we have the status of G-d's children — **“banim laMakom.”** In the merit of this status, HKB”H accepts our teshuvah as a father, who is able to renounce his own **“kavod”** for the sake of his children.

“You are the children and I am your Father” — Build Me a Sanctuary

Continuing along this path, let us advance to the next step — to examine the second method of atonement for the **“cheit ha’eigel,”** mentioned in parshas Pekudei -- the Mishkan. The Mishkan also serves as a clear-cut proof that we possess the status of **“banim laMakom.”** Let us examine the Midrash (S.R. 34, 3) on the passuk (Shemos 25, 8): **“ועשו לי מקדש ושכנתי בתוכם” — they shall make Me a sanctuary, so that I may dwell among them.** The Midrash explains why HKB”H commanded that a sanctuary — a **“mikdash”** — be built for Him:

“אתם בנים ואני אביכם, שנאמר (דברים יד-א) בנים אתם לה' אלקיכם, ואני אביכם שנאמר (ירמיה לא-ח) כי הייתי לישראל לאב, כבוד לבנים כשהן אצל אביהם, וכבוד לאב כשהוא אצל בניו, וכן הוא אומר (משלי יז-1) עטרת זקנים בני בנים, עשו בית לאב שיבוא וישרה אצל בניו, לכך נאמר ועשו לי מקדש.”

You are the children and I am your father, as it states: “You are children to Hashem, your G-d.” And I am your father, as it states: “For I have been a father to Yisrael.” It is an honor for the children when they are with their father; and it is an honor for the father when he is with his children. Thus it states: “The crown of elders is grandchildren.” Build a house for your Father, so that he may come and dwell near his children. Hence it says: “They shall make Me a sanctuary.”

It appears that we can suggest an explanation for the connection between our being called **“banim laMakom”** and the mitzvah of: **“They shall make Me a sanctuary.”** After all, the purpose of Hashem's Mikdash is to offer korbanos there. The Rambam writes (Hilchos Beit HaBechirah 1, 1): **“מצות עשה לעשות — בית לה' מוכן להיות מקריבים בו הקרבנות, וחוגגין אליו שלוש פעמים בשנה”**

“שנאמר ועשו לי מקדש” — it is a positive commandment to build a house for Hashem suited to offer sacrifices in it; it is a gathering place to celebrate three times a year . . .

Now, the purpose of the korbanos is to atone for the sins of the community and the individual; a korban “olah” is offered for improper and irreverent thoughts; the daily “tamid” offerings in the morning and evening provided atonement for all sorts of transgressions. Regarding the korban “tamid,” the Midrash Tanchuma states (Pinchas 13): **“מעולם לא לן אדם בירושלים ובידו עוון, כיצד, תמיד של שחר מכפר על עוונות שנעשו בלילה, תמיד של בין הערבים — a person never stayed overnight in Yerushalayim with an outstanding transgression. How so? The morning “tamid” atoned for the transgression committed during the night; while the evening “tamid” atoned for the transgressions committed during the day.**

Nevertheless, it is essential to perform teshuvah in conjunction with the offering of the korban. The Gemara explains (Berachos 23a):

“מאי דכתיב (קהלת ד-יז) שמוור רגלך כאשר תלך אל בית האלקים, שמוור עצמך שלא תחטא, ואם תחטא הבא קרבן לפני, וקרוב לשמוע, אמר רבא, הוי קרוב לשמוע דברי חכמים, שאם חוטאים מביאים קרבן ועושים תשובה, מתת הכסילים זבח, אל תהי ככסילים שחוטאים ומביאים קרבן ואין עושים תשובה.”

What is the meaning of that which is written: “Guard your foot when you go to the House of G-d”? Guard yourself so that you will not sin; however, if you do sin, bring a korban to Me. The passuk continues: “and be ready to listen.” Rava said: Be ready to listen to the words of the sages; for, if they sin, they should bring a korban and perform teshuvah. The passuk continues: “rather than to offer a sacrifice of fools.” Do not be like the fools who sin and bring a korban but do not perform teshuvah.

Thus, we see in no uncertain terms that the reason for building the Mikdash is for the purpose of bringing the korbanos. The korbanos in conjunction with teshuvah provide atonement for the transgressions.

It is now quite clear why HKB”H commanded that a Mikdash be built for Him: **“אתם בנים ואני אביכם... כבוד לבנים כשהן אצל אביהם, וכבוד לאב כשהוא אצל בניו... עשו בית לאב שיבוא וישרה אצל בניו, לכך נאמר ועשו לי מקדש.”** By providing a sanctuary so that our Heavenly Father can be near His children, we establish that we have the status of “banim laMakom.” As a result, all of the korbanos will be accepted in conjunction with teshuvah, because a father who renounces his kavod, his kavod is renounced.

The Parah Adumah Resembles a Mother Who Cleans Up after Her Son

At last, we have arrived at the third method of atonement for the “cheit ha’eigel” — the Parah Adumah. Upon careful consideration, we find that this form of atonement is also related to the fact that Yisrael are “banim laMakom.” After all, the Parah Adumah is compared to a mother who comes and cleans up the filth and feces of her son, as Rashi explains in the name of Rabbi Moshe HaDarshan; in similar fashion, the Parah Adumah — the mother cow -- atones for the “eigel” — the calf.

We can expand on this notion based on the sacred words of the Noam Elimelech (Chukas). The entire matter of the Parah Adumah is simply an allusion to the holy Shechinah — the children’s mother. The source for this idea comes from the Zohar hakadosh (Chukas 180b) that addresses that which is written regarding the Parah Adumah (Bamidbar 19, 2): **“אשר אין — which is free of any blemish.** This passuk alludes to the Shechinah of whom it is said (Shir HaShirim 4, 7): **“כולך יפה — you are entirely fair My beloved and you are free of any blemish.** Thus, we find that the Parah Adumah alludes to the mother of the children — the Shechinah — who atones for her children’s indiscretions related to the “eigel” — like the mother who comes to clean up the excrement of her young son.

After contemplating the matter, I would like to explain why HKB”H established the mitzvah of the Parah Adumah as a “chok” — a precept lacking apparent reason — as it is written (Bamidbar 19, 2): **“זאת חוקת התורה אשר צוה ה' לאמר, דבר אל בני ישראל ויקחו אליך פרה אדומה תמימה אשר אין בה מום אשר לא עלה עליה — This is the statute of the Torah, which Hashem has commanded, saying: Speak to Bnei Yisrael, and they shall take to you a perfectly red cow, which has no blemish, upon which a yoke has not come.”**

Rashi comments: **לפי שהשטן ואומות העולם מוניין את ישראל לומר, מה המצוה הזאת ומה טעם יש בה, לפיכך כתב בה חוקה, גזירה — because the Satan and the nations of the world aggrrieve Yisrael by saying, “What is this commandment?” “What reason is there to it?” Therefore it is referred to as a “statute,”** implying that it is a decree from Hashem which we do not have the right to question.

We must endeavor to explain why HKB”H only saw fit to admonish us with regards to the statute of the Parah: **“גזירה — היא מלפני ואין לך רשות להרהר אחריה” — it is a divine decree**

and you have no right to question it. We find no similar admonitions regarding the other “chukim” — statutes without apparent reasons.

It appears that we can explain the matter based on the well-known fact that the mitzvos of the Torah can be divided up into “chukim” and “mishpatim,” as it is written (Vayikra 18, 5): **“וַשְׁמַרְתֶּם אֶת חֻקֹּתַי וְאֶת מִשְׁפָּטַי אֲשֶׁר יַעֲשֶׂה אֹתָם הָאָדָם וְחַי בָּהֶם”** — **you shall observe My decrees (“chukim”) and My judgments (“mishpatim”), which man shall carry out and live by them.** “Chukim” are mitzvos whose rationales are not apparent or revealed to us; while “mishpatim” are sensible, intuitive mitzvos, whose rationales are apparent to us.

Now, Yisrael’s greatness is related to the fact that they fulfill even the mitzvos classified as “chukim,” without comprehending their true reasons. It is analogous to a son who does all that his father instructs him to do even before he fully comprehends the rationales and deeper significance of his actions. The goyim, however, even if they fulfill the mitzvos, they only fulfill the seven Noahide laws — “sheva mitzvos bnei Noach” — which are rational and intuitive. Therefore, they are not considered “banim laMakom” but merely slaves.

We can suggest that this is the message conveyed by David HaMelech in the passuk (Tehillim 2, 7): **“אֲסַפְּרָה אֶל חֹק ה' אֲמַר אֵלַי — I proclaim as a “chok” that Hashem said to me, “You are My son; I have begotten you today.”** In other words, in the merit that I fulfill the mitzvos that fall into the category of “chok” — i.e. they lack an obvious rationale — HKB”H said to me: **“You are My son”** — because a son obeys his father’s commands even without understanding them.

This now enlightens us as to why HKB”H established the mitzvah of the Parah Adumah as a “chok” — without apparent reason. As explained, this mitzvah is designed to atone for the “cheit ha’eigel” — similar to the mother who comes to clean up the mess made by her son. The Parah alludes to the Shechinah, the mother of the children, who provides atonement for Yisrael, who are considered “banim laMakom.” Therefore, HKB”H wanted Yisrael to fulfill this mitzvah as a “chok”; thus, they will be considered “banim laMakom” and will merit atonement.

In truth, this is why the Satan and the nations of the world heckle and mock Yisrael: **“מִהַ הַמִּצְוָה הַזֹּאת וּמֵה טַעַם יֵשׁ בָּהּ”** — asking derisively as to the nature of this mitzvah and its rationale. For, they are jealous of Yisrael’s status as “banim laMakom” — in the merit that they observe even mitzvos which are categorized as “chukim” — lacking apparent reasons or explanations. Therefore, they want Yisrael to find a reason and explanation for performing the mitzvah of Parah Adumah. For this reason: **“לִפְיֶיךָ כָּתַב בְּהַ חֹקָה, גְּזִירָה הִיא מִלִּפְנֵי וְאֵין לָךְ רִשּׁוֹת לַהֲרַחֵק אַחֲרֶיהָ”** — the Torah labels this mitzvah as a statute — a divine decree which cannot be questioned. For, in the merit of fulfilling this mitzvah as a “chok,” we are considered “banim laMakom.” As a result, we merit the atonement of the Parah — just like the mother who comes to clean up the excrement of her son.

Thus, the common denominator of these three methods of atonement mentioned in the three parshiyos — Shabbas in parshas Vayakheil, the Mishkan in parshas Pekudei and the Parah Adumah in parshas Parah — is that they all verify that we have the status of “banim laMakom” and that HKB”H is our father. As such, we should understand that we have the possibility of tikun — to rectify all of our wrongdoings by means of complete, sincere teshuvah. Since HKB”H is our father, He can renounce His kavod and accept our teshuvah. As a result, we are able to atone for the “cheit ha’eigel,” which was a “gezeirat hamelech” — a divine decree aimed at demonstrating the process of teshuvah to the masses.

It is important to add one last note. Why do we need three separate proofs from these three methods of atonement — **Shabbas, Mishkan and Parah** — to establish that we possess the status of “banim laMakom”? As we explained at the beginning of this essay, these three methods of atonement correspond to the three parameters that must be accounted for and rectified: **עוֹלָם, שָׁנָה, נֶפֶשׁ** — space, time and spirit (living creature). Hence, we require three methods to substantiate that we are indeed “banim laMakom” — everywhere in the universe, at all times and including every Jewish person without exception.

Mazal Tov to Rabbi Pinchas Friedman Shlit"a for the wedding of his granddaughter

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