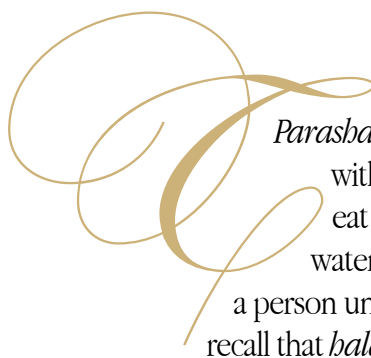


# Tzav

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 This *Shabbos* is also *Parashas Parah*. As we learn in *Parashas Naso*, a person who has become defiled by contact with the dead (no, not through a *séance*) is ineligible to eat from the *Korban Pesach*. By being sprinkled with the water of the *Parah Adumah* (Red Heifer) was the process a person underwent to become ritually pure again. Hence, we recall that *halachab* in advance of *Pesach*.

The *Parah Adumah* is the quintessential *chok*—statute. This means there is something about the *mitzvah* that defies human logic, but apparently not why a red heifer is the animal of choice, as *Rashi* explains:

*A red cow:* This can be compared to the son of a maidservant who dirtied 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. (*Rashi, Bamidbar 19:22*)

Thus, the red heifer is the Divine response to the golden calf. Had they not built and worshipped the calf, the Jewish people would have remained immortal. The calf caused death and the impurity that results, so its "mother" has to clean up the "mess."

It's a nice explanation. It's also problematic. It sounds as if the *mitzvah* of *Parah Adumah* would not have existed had the Jewish people not sinned with the golden calf. But that is not the case since every *mitzvah* is eternal by definition, which means there always had to be such a *mitzvah*. How does this work with *Rashi's* explanation?

The *Leshem*, when talking about the eternity of *mitzvos*, deals with a similar question. According to the *Gemora*, *mitzvos* will be *battel*—nullified—in *Yemos HaMoshiach*, the Messianic Era (*Shabbos 151b*). But how can *eternal mitzvos* ever not exist?

What the *Gemora* means, the *Leshem* explains, is not that the *act* of a *mitzvah* will no longer be performed. Rather, a *mitzvah* won't seem then like a *mitzvah* seems now, like a yoke and an obligation. With the *yetzer hara* gone completely (*Succah* 52a), a *mitzvah* will become second nature (*Drushei Olam HaTohu*, *Chelek* 2, *Drush* 4, *Anaf* 12, *Siman* 12).

The *yetzer hara* is basically bodily instinct, and *mitzvos* tend to go against it. This is how *mitzvos* help to spiritually refine a person. It's the Torah's way of taking a person's life's steering wheel out of the hands of the body and giving it to the soul, so they can become a *Tzelem Elokim* and live in the "image of God."

But the opportunity to achieve such refinement through our free will choices will end with the death of the *yetzer hara* and bodily instinct. At least the kind of instinct that tends to make personal comfort a priority over spiritual growth.

## Shabbos Day

RASHI ALLUDES TO this same idea at the beginning of this week's *parsha*, on the verse:

*Command—Tzav—Abaron and his sons, saying, "This is the law of the burnt offering. . ."* (*Vayikra* 6:2)

*Rashi* comments:

The Torah especially needs to urge [people to fulfill *mitzvos*] where monetary loss is involved. (*Rashi*)

The fact that money is involved in a *mitzvah* instigates the *yetzer hara* of a person. The *yetzer hara* will spend all kinds of money on things that give the body instant gratification. But why spend money on a *mitzvah*, for which the reward won't follow until the World to Come? Not an easy sell to the *yetzer hara*.

That creates bodily resistance. It can be subtle, so subtle that even the person themselves doesn't realize they are being affected and held back. But on some level, a little less of the person is used for the *mitzvah* than is ideal.

Even for someone like Moshe *Rabbeinu*. There is a *Shalsbeles* cantillation note above the word for, "and he slaughtered it" (*Vayikra* 8:23) towards the end of this week's *parsha*. In the three other places it occurs in the Torah, it hints to some kind of hesitation in the heart, something not recognized on the outside of the person.

Like Lot not wanting to leave Sdom with the angel despite its impending destruction.

Like Yosef not wanting to run from the wife of Potiphar despite the sin involved.

But what reason did Moshe have at the inauguration of Aharon and his sons into the Temple service, to hesitate?

Because he had known, ever since *Parashas Tetzaveh*, that great people were destined to die on that day to sanctify the Name of God. He had assumed, until next week's *parsha*, that that was supposed to have been himself and Aharon. Could that not have easily been somewhat of a distraction during the *mitzvah*, a subtle one that we could only know about because of the *Shalsbeles*?

As the *Lesbem* explains, we learn Torah and perform *mitzvos* primarily to spiritually refine our bodies while rectifying our souls. This means training the body to stop resisting both, like teaching a child to grow up and do the more responsible thing for their own good and development. That takes will, *lots* of will.

But it won't any longer the moment God dispenses with the *Sitra Achra* and *yetzer bara* in *Yemos HaMosbiach*. Then the body will be happy to do any *mitzvah*. It will no longer have to be commanded.

### **Seudas Shlishis**

THIS RAISES A question: If the *Parah Adumah* was always meant to be a *mitzvah*, was the golden calf destined to occur? This could suggest, yes:

Go and see how The Holy One, Blessed is He, when He created the world created the Angel of Death on the first day as well. . . Man was created on the sixth day, and yet death was blamed on him. What is this like? A man who decides that he wants to divorce his wife and writes her a document of divorce. He then goes home with it and looks for a pretext to give it to her.

"Prepare me a drink," he tells her.

She does, and taking it from her he says, "Here is your divorce."

She asks him, "Why?"

He tells her, "Leave my house! You made me a warm drink!" to which she replies, "Were you able to know that I would prepare you a warm drink in advance that you wrote a divorce document and came home with it?"

Similarly, Adam told The Holy One, Blessed is He, "Master of the Universe, the Torah was with You for 2,000 years before You created the world. . . yet it says, '*This is the law when a man will die in a tent*' (*Bamidbar* 19:14). If You had not planned death for Your creations, would You have written this? Rather, You just want to blame death on me!" (*Tanchuma, Vayaishev* 4)

In other words, the *Midrash* says, as much as Adam *HaRishon* seemed to have the choice to avoid sin and death, he didn't. He was destined to eat from the *Aitz HaDa'as* and to bring death into the world.

Not only this, but the *Midrash* continues:

It was similar concerning [the sale of] Yosef. . . Rav Yudan said, "The Holy One, Blessed is He, wanted to carry out the decree of, '*Know that you shall surely be (strangers)*' (*Bereishis* 15:13), and set it up that Ya'akov would love Yosef [more] so the brothers would hate him and sell him to Arabs, and they would all [eventually] go down to Egypt. . ." (*Tanchuma, Vayaishev* 4)

On one hand, this information is a relief. It takes away the need to find a good explanation for, how such great people could commit such not-so-great acts. On the other hand, it is disturbing because it implies that we can be railroaded by Divine Providence down the wrong path. . . against our will.

One could argue that perhaps this idea only applies to specific events with great impact on Jewish history. Or, perhaps it is a deeper insight into free will itself, and how we're meant to use it.

### **Melave Malkah**

ONE THING IS for certain, we have free will. God told us so, and tradition teaches that we will be judged for our choices. You can question what free will is, or wonder if we have any. But when it comes to life, it would be wise to assume you have it and use it responsibly.

Something else we can be certain about is that though we have free will, we do not have *absolute* free will. Many choices are made for us by life itself, imposed upon us since so many things are out of our control. But then again, does that take away anything from the choice I made, as long as I believed at the time my choice could make a difference?

Let's face it, history is not random. God made it with a specific purpose in mind, and with a master plan to be fulfilled. He knows the future and doesn't make mistakes, so whatever He had in mind was as good as done once He started to think about it. This is true right down to every person who will ever exist and every decision they will ever make.

At the end of the day, though a person makes all kinds of plans, there is a good chance that they will not turn out as anticipated. We don't know the future, which allows us to live with the perception that our decisions can make a difference and

direct the course of history. It's all we need to be able to make choices for which we will be held accountable.

This does not completely solve the mystery of free will, but who says we can at this time, or that we should? The *Parah Adumah* is a *mitzvah* with a message, and it reads: Some things you can understand while others you cannot. Understand what you can, but don't get bogged down and distracted by what you can't. Recognize the free will opportunity of every moment, and utilize it meaningfully. It will save you in this world and reward you in the next one.

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Good *Shabbos*,  
Pinchas Winston