

## דבר תורה על פרשת פרה

The **פיוטים** for **פרשת פרה** remind us that the laws of **פרה אדומה** are unique because the meaning of many of its rules is beyond human understanding. We do not understand why the cow has to be red. We do not understand why the cow has to be one that has never worked; that has never had a yoke placed upon its neck. We do not understand why the ashes purify a person who is impure. We do not understand why the one who prepares the ashes becomes impure. Because there is so much about the laws of **פרה אדומה** that we do not understand, those laws have been showcased as the paradigm **חוק**, a law that we perform without understanding why.

The **פיוטים** for **פרשת פרה** include information taken from **מדרשים** that advise us that the underpinnings of the laws of **פרה אדומה** will be explained to us **בימות המשיח**. Until then, the mystery of the laws of **פרה אדומה** may help us better understand our relationship with the **רבנו של עולם**.

Many believe that **פרשת פרה** was established to remind the Jews to prepare themselves for bringing the **קרבן פסח** by remaining pure and by avoiding any circumstances that might make them impure. But a review of the **חומש** shows that the law of **פרה אדומה** was instituted as a **כפרה** for **מעשה העגל**. As the **מדרש** says:

**מדרש אנדה במדבר פרק יט ד"ה זאת חקת-ומה צוה הקב"ה להביא פרה אדומה? לכפר על מעשה העגל, משל לולד שטינף לחצר המלך אמר המלך תבוא אם זה הולד ותקנה צואת בנה, כך אמר הקב"ה תבוא פרה ותכפר על מעשה העגל.**

The decision by the **רבנו של עולם** to forgive the **בני ישראל** after the **מעשה העגל** was not based on logic and reason. Had the **רבנו של עולם** based His decision on reason, then undoubtedly the **רבנו של עולם** would have destroyed the Jews or at a minimum, would have abandoned the Jews to fend for themselves in the desert. And could anyone have blamed the **רבנו של עולם**? The sixth **משנה** in the fourth **פרק** of **מסכת תענית** tells us that the **לוחות** were broken on **יז' תמוז**, only 40 days after **מתן תורה**, only three months after **יציאת מצרים**. How could a people who witnessed so many miracles turn away so quickly from the **רבנו של עולם**. How could the **רבנו של עולם** forgive a people who saw so many miracles and who so quickly forgot what their eyes witnessed. We do not know

the answer to that question. It obviously is based on thinking that is beyond the capability of a human to understand. And what was the רבונו של עולם's next step? To provide the מצוה of פרה אדומה, as a כפרה for the מעשה העגל. By requiring a מצוה that was beyond the understanding of the human mind as a כפרה, the רבונו של עולם was demanding that Jewish people also view their relationship with the רבונו של עולם as not based on rational thinking but that based on thinking that was beyond rational thinking; beyond the ability of the human mind to comprehend.

That such a relationship exists and that it is beyond rational thinking is confirmed on the seder night. Through the מצוה of סיפור יציאת מצרים, we celebrate our freedom from Egyptian control. But that is not the message we convey to our table mates as we begin the סדר. This is how we begin the סדר: **הא לחמא עניא די אכלו**  
**אבהתנא בארע דמצרים. כל דכפינ ייתי ויאכול, כל דצריך ייתי ויפסח. השתא הכא, לשנה**  
**הבא בארעא דישראל. השתא עבדי, לשנה הבאה בני חורין.**

Although we are celebrating our freedom at the סדר table, we begin by acknowledging that we are in exile and that we are indentured to the inhabitants of the countries we live in. Why do we as Jews bother to read the הגדה and to fulfill the מצוה of סיפור יציאת מצרים when we know that we are not truly free? If our relationship with the רבונו של עולם was built on logic or reason, we would have stopped holding סדרים as soon as the בית המקדש was destroyed. But like the רבונו של עולם, we do not see our relationship as being based on reason or logic. We too see our relationship with the רבונו של עולם as being beyond logic and beyond reason.

The result of the חטא העגל and the forgiveness of the sin by the רבונו של עולם through the פרה אדומה was that כלל ישראל and the רבונו של עולם entered into a relationship that was not based on what can be seen or felt by human beings. It became a relationship that transcended what the human mind could understand. That is why the פרה אדומה is relevant today even though it is no longer possible to purify ourselves through its ashes.