

"This is the decree of the Torah ... and they shall take to you a completely red cow ..." (19:2)

Although the *mitzvah* of *Parah Adumah* is difficult to comprehend, a number of lessons can be derived from its unique *halachos*. The *Midrash* takes note of the fact that only a female is acceptable for this *korban*. For other sacrifices, in contrast, a male or female are equally eligible. *Chazal* explain that the *Parah Adumah* serves to cleanse *Klal Yisrael* from the sin of the Golden Calf. This concept has given rise to the saying, "Let the (mother) cow atone for the defilement created by the (golden) calf." Thus, only a female is accepted for the *Parah Adumah*.

In expounding on the analogy between the "mother" and the "calf," *Horav Yitzchak Goldwasser, Shlita*, suggests a new perspective on their relationship. The sin created by the "calf" was the transformation of gold, an inanimate substance, into a "living" being. Conversely, the *parah/mother*, a living animal, is killed and transformed by the fire into a pile of "dead" ash.

Fire has the paradoxical ability both to destroy and to create. It can take a vibrant, breathing animal and convert it to ash, while it can also take a piece of "dead" gold and create a "living" idol. Just as fire has "two sides," every substance and activity can similarly be viewed from two perspectives. Destruction can serve as the precursor for building, and building can regrettably represent a form of destruction.

The lesson we can glean is simple, but profound. We observe things happening which we are not able to rationalize. We see what seems to be demolition but is, in reality, the foundation for future purity. We also note efforts made to create: the formation of committees; the founding of organizations; or the development of institutions. For all intent and purposes, these acts give the appearance of "building" but really represent more than courtship with disaster.

The *Parah Adumah* teaches us not to judge a book by its cover, not to stereotype people or organizations but rather to delve deeper into the truth. This clarity of vision can only be achieved by interpreting events through the perspective of *Torah*, which is the essence of truth.