

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

The *Mishnah* in *Meseches Parah* 3:7 states: *If the Parah Adumah refuses to go out, they should not take a black cow to accompany it. Some people might claim that the black one had been slaughtered. Likewise, they should not take out another red cow, for some people might assert that two cows had been slaughtered.* The *Mishnah* addresses the problem of how a "stubborn" *Parah Adumah* might be "coaxed" to come along. The *halachah* seems to be clear; one may do nothing which would give grounds for the non-believer to ridicule and disclaim the validity of the *Parah Adumah* ritual.

This *Mishnah* is perplexing. The *Parah Adumah* ritual occurred once in hundreds of years. The first *Parah Adumah* ritual was performed during Moshe's tenure. The next one was overseen by Ezra *Hasofer*. Clearly, the service was unique. All of *Klal Yisrael* must have assembled to share in this auspicious occasion. Yet, there was an overriding concern that the non-believer, the apostate who had turned himself off from *Torah* Judaism, might accuse *Bais Din* of switching cows or slaughtering two of them. Does not this concern seem overly dramatic?

Horav M.D. Soloveitchik, Shlita, infers from this *Mishnah* a compelling lesson. For the non-believer there is no proof. All of *Klal Yisrael* can observe that only one cow was slaughtered, yet he will find some way to refute what is unequivocal. For someone who has led a factitious lifestyle, far removed from *Torah* dictate, acknowledging the veracity of the *Parah Adumah* rite is tantamount to conceding his own error. For most people, conceding defeat is more difficult than making a preposterous claim against the authenticity of the *Torah*.