



THE SHORT VORT ON THE TABLE

Parshat Chukat Rabbi Nuriel Klinger

Parshat Chukat opens with the mysterious Mitzvah of the Parah Adumah – the red cow used to purify someone who became Tamei (ritually impure) through contact with the dead. The Torah describes the process: the red cow is burned, and three items are thrown into the fire – cedar wood (עץ ארז), hyssop (אזוב), and crimson thread (שני תולעת).

While the whole mitzvah is a Chok – a law beyond human logic – the Akeidat Yitzchak (Rav Yitzchak Arama) offers a beautiful insight into the symbolic meaning of these items, particularly the cedar and the hyssop.

The cedar is a tall, mighty tree. It represents gaavah – arrogance, pride, feeling too important or invincible. On the other extreme, the hyssop is a tiny, low plant, close to the ground and easily bent. It symbolizes low self-worth, the kind of person who says “I’m a nobody and I have nothing to contribute.”

Says the Akeidat Yitzchak: If you want to become spiritually pure – if you want to draw close to Hashem – you have to throw both of these into the fire. You have to get rid of both extremes: arrogance and despair.

The Torah is teaching us to find a healthy balance. A Jew must be humble, but not feel worthless. Confident, but not arrogant. Only when we burn away the extremes and embrace a balanced, healthy sense of self can we truly come close to Hashem and live lives of meaning and contribution.

**SHORT & SWEET IDEAS
IN THE PARSHA W/
Rabbi Jonathan Morgenstern
& Rabbi Nuriel Klinger**

