

Good Shabbos Everyone. In this week's parsha Chukas, we read about the mysterious mitzvah of Parah Aduma, the red heifer. The procedure of the Parah Aduma involved the use of the ashes of a burned red cow to purify those who had been contaminated through contact with a dead body. The mystery of the power of the Parah Aduma to purify lays in the deepest level of understanding the Torah. Even the wisest of men Shlomo HaMelech, could not fathom the mitzvah of the red cow.

One lesson we can however learn from the mitzvah of the red cow, is a lesson in human relations. One irony of the red cow procedure is the following: it purified the impure; while at the same time, it made impure the Kohen who performed the procedure. After the procedure, the Kohen would himself have to undergo a ritual purification, albeit a less complicated procedure than the one who had touched a corpse. The lesson we learn from this irony is the following: We must do chesed - kindness for others, even when it causes us a loss of time or money, for example.

Chaim Tzvi Schwartz was not a Lubavitcher Chassid -- before the war, his family had been followers of the Rebbe of Munkatch -- but a certain day in 1946 found him seeking the counsel of the then Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Scheersohn. Rabbi Schwartz was a young refugee who had lost his entire family, and the only world he knew, in the Holocaust, and was at a loss as to what to do with his life.

"Speak to my son-in-law, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson," said the Rebbe, and gave Chaim his blessing. The Rebbe's son-in-law suggested that the young rabbi take up residence in a certain city in Brazil. "Brazil?"

"There are a great number of Jewish refugees settling in Brazil. Due to the tribulations that our people have undergone in the last few years, most of them lack even the most basic rudiments of a Jewish education. Already, many have fallen prey to assimilation and intermarriage. It is the responsibility of every Torah-educated Jew to prevent the spiritual dissolution of our people. Go to Brazil and help build a community of knowledgeable and observant Jews." Chaim accepted the mission, moved to Brazil, and founded a Jewish day school there. Much effort and toil were necessary to find the funding, train the teachers, and convince the parents of the importance of granting their children a Jewish education.

Over the years, Rabbi Schwartz saw his school flourish and grow, and its graduates form the nucleus of a community of proud, committed Jews. Rabbi Schwartz maintained an infrequent but warm contact with the man who had sent him to Brazil, who had meanwhile assumed the leadership of the Chabad-Lubavitch movement following the passing of his father-in-law in 1950.

From time to time, Rabbi Schwartz would seek the Rebbe's advice on various challenges and decisions he faced in the course of his work. It was on one such occasion, several years after his arrival in Brazil, that Rabbi Schwartz truly realized the scope of the Rebbe's concern for his people.

Rabbi Schwartz related this incident to a Lubavitcher Chassid he met on a flight from Brazil to New York: One day-he began his tale-I received a call from the parents of one of the children in my school, requesting a meeting. While this was a fairly common request, the anxiety in the voices on the phone told me that this was no simple matter. I invited them to meet with me in my home that evening. "This does not concern our son," began the father, after they had settled in my study, "who is doing wonderfully in your school, but our eldest daughter, who grew up here before you came. As you know, we are not very observant, but it is important to us that our children should retain their identity as Jews. This is why we send our son to you, despite the fact that your school is considerably more 'religious' than ourselves.

"To get to the point, our daughter has informed us that she has fallen in love with a non-Jew and that they intend to marry. We have tried everything to dissuade her, but our arguments, appeals, threats and tears have all been to no avail. She now refuses to discuss the matter with us at all and has moved out of our home. Rabbi! You are our only hope! Perhaps you can reach her, perhaps you can impress upon her the gravity of the betrayal against her people, her parents and her own identity in what she intends to do!"

"Would she agree to meet with me?" I asked. "If she knew that we had spoken to you, she'd refuse."

"Then I'll go speak to her on my own." I took her address from her parents and rang her bell that very evening. She was visibly annoyed to learn of my mission, but too well-mannered not to invite me in. We ended up speaking for several hours. She listened politely and promised to consider everything I said, but I came away with the feeling that I had had little effect on her decision. For several days I pondered the matter, trying to think of what might possibly be done to prevent the loss of a Jewish soul. Then I thought of my last resort -- the Rebbe.

I called the Rebbe's secretary, Rabbi Hodakov, related to him the entire affair, and asked for the Rebbe's advice as to what might be done. A few minutes later the phone rang. "The Rebbe says to tell the young woman," said Rabbi Hodakov, "that there is a Jew in Brooklyn who cannot sleep at night because she intends to marry a non-Jew."

The unexpected reply confused me, and I failed to understand what Rabbi Hodakov was saying. "Who is this Jew?" I blurted out. Then I heard the Rebbe's voice on the other extension: "His name is Mendel Schneerson."

I slowly returned the receiver to its cradle, more confused than ever. Could I possibly do what the Rebbe suggested? Why, she'll slam the door in my face! After agonizing all night, I decided to carry out the Rebbe's instructions to the letter. After all, the fate of a Jewish soul was at stake, and what did I have to lose, except for my pride?

Early the next morning I was at her door. "Listen," she said before I could utter a word, "whom I marry is my own affair, and no else's. I respect rabbis and men of faith, so I heard you out when I should have shown you the door. Please go away and stop bothering me." "There is one more thing I need to say to you," said I. "Then say it, and go." "There is a Jew in Brooklyn who cannot sleep at night because you intend to marry a non-Jew." "That's what you came to tell me?!" she said, incredulous, and proceeded to close the door. Midway she stopped. "Who is this Jew?" "A great Jewish leader Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, known as the Lubavitcher Rebbe," I replied. "The Rebbe is greatly concerned about the material and spiritual well-being of every Jew, and agonizes over every soul that is lost to its people." "What does he look like? Do you have a picture of him?"

"I should have a picture somewhere. I'll go and get it for you." To my surprise, she didn't object, and indicated assent with a mute nod. I rushed home and nearly turned the house upside down in search of a photograph of the Rebbe. I finally found a photo in a desk drawer and hurried back to the young woman's apartment. One look at the Rebbe's likeness and her face turned pale.

"Yes, it's him," she whispered. "All week long," she explained, "this man has been appearing in my dreams and imploring me not to abandon my people. I told myself that I was conjuring up an image of a Jewish sage and putting those words in his mouth as a reaction to what you and my parents have been saying to me. But no, it was no conjecture. I have never met this man in my life, seen a picture of him, or even heard of him. But this is he-this is the man I have been seeing in my dreams..." **Good Shabbos Everyone.**