

# A Taste of Torah Completely Red

By Rabbi Shachne Sommers

“Take for yourself a completely red cow...”. Rashi, quoting Rabbi Moshe Hadarshan, tells us that the Torah’s description of the Red Heifer symbolizes the Jewish people’s sin of the Golden Calf and its rectification. The word “red”, says Rashi, symbolizes the sin. The word “complete” is symbolic of the “complete” state of the Jewish people before the sin, which they would return to after rectifying it.

This interpretation seems strange. According to this explanation, the redness and the completeness are teaching two opposite concepts; the redness symbolizing sin and the completeness symbolizing the lack of sin. But the redness and the completeness of the cow that the Torah is describing are not in two texts. As Rashi himself explains earlier, the completeness is a description of the redness, i.e., completely red.

Why would the Torah symbolize two opposite concepts simultaneously? There are two possible approaches to dealing with errors one has made in life. One is the “red” approach, and the other, the “complete” approach. The

“red” approach focuses on the errors themselves. One reflects upon the errors, coming to the realization of how “red” - how damaging - they were

The “complete” approach is different. Instead of reflecting on the past errors, one chooses to concentrate on the potential to be “complete” - purified - of these mistakes, and to continue through life without them.

Each of these approaches is insufficient. If one merely focuses on the damage caused by sin, one could fall into depression and hopelessness. If one forgets about the sin and tries to live his life as if it doesn’t exist, one risks unwittingly being again trapped in the same destructive behavior. Therefore, the Torah symbolizes these two ideas, the “redness” of the sin and the “completeness” of its rectification, simultaneously. These ideas should not be used independently.

It is only through the proper balance and mix of awareness of the “redness” of one’s past mistakes, and the proper understanding of one’s potential for “completeness”, that allows true growth.

## Ask the Rabbi Rabbit Habits

Steven Stone wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

How can the Torah say that the rabbit chews its cud (Leviticus 11:5-6) when science knows that it does not?

Dear Steven Stone,

The Torah commands us not to eat

“the arneves, for it chews its cud but its hoof is not split.” Commentaries translate arneves as either coney, rock badger or hyrax, all of which do in fact chew their cud. Also, the rabbit is auto-coprophagous, a form of cud-chewing, where the cud “ferments” externally.

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## Stories For The Soul

### A Perfect Home Run

In Brooklyn, New York, Chush is a school that caters to learning-disabled children. At a Chush fundraising dinner, the father of a student at Chush delivered a speech that would never be forgotten by all who attended. After extolling the school and its dedicated staff, he cried out, “Where is the perfection in my son Shaya? Everything G-d does is done with perfection. But my child cannot understand things as other children do. My child cannot remember facts and figures as other children do. Where is G-d’s perfection?”

The audience was shocked by the question, pained by the father’s anguish and stilled by the piercing query. “I believe,” the father answered, “That when G-d brings a child like this into the world, the perfection that He seeks is in the way people react to this child.” He then told the following story about his son Shaya.

One afternoon Shaya and his father walked past a park where some boys Shaya knew were playing baseball. Shaya asked, “Do you think they will let me play?”

Shaya’s father knew that his son was not at all athletic and that most boys would not want him on their team. But Shaya’s father understood that if his son was chosen to play it would give him a comfortable sense of belonging. Shaya’s father approached one of the boys in the field and asked if Shaya could play. The boy looked around for guidance from his teammates. Getting none, he took matters into his own hands and said, “We are losing by six runs and the game is in

## Kollel Happenings

### FATHERS-AND-SONS PROGRAM SUN., MARCH 27 AT EDOS

The next Fathers-and-Sons learning program will be held on March 27 at EDOS. Breakfast begins at 9 a.m. with learning following. For information, contact Rabbi Yehuda Amsel at 303-820-2855 or email [rya@denverkollel.org](mailto:rya@denverkollel.org)



### 'YOUR MONEY OR YOUR LIFE!' AT APRIL 6 TORAH FOR TYCOONS

Join Dr. Stuart Senkfor, Partner, Denver Nephrologists, and Rabbi Aron Yehuda Schwab, Dean, Denver Community Kollel for "Your Money or Your Life!: Healthcare Funding Triage" at the next Torah for Tycoons, Wed., April 6. The program will be held at noon at the East Side Kosher Deli. CLE credits pending. Cost: \$20. To RSVP, call 303-820-2855 or email [info@denverkollel.org](mailto:info@denverkollel.org)



### TUESDAY NIGHT TORAH AT AISH KODESH IN BOULDER

Join the Kollel for a dynamic one-on-one and small groups Torah encounter. Ma'ariv will be held at 8:15 followed by Torah study at 8:30. Program will be held at Aish Kodesh, 1805 Balsam Ave. For information, contact Rabbi Moshe Heyman at 303-820-2855 or [rmh@denverkollel.org](mailto:rmh@denverkollel.org) or Charles Fried at 917-499-4307 or [charlesfried@gmail.com](mailto:charlesfried@gmail.com).

## Interpersonal Issues Line-Item

Strictly speaking, cutting a line is not considered theft. However, it is akin to theft and is thus forbidden.

However, a storeowner may move someone ahead of the line if he so chooses.

It is permitted to hold a place in

line for another, as long as one is not holding a place for himself as well.

*Adapted with permission from "The Halachos of Other People's Money" by Rabbi Pinchas Bodner (Feldheim Publishers)*

## Stories for the Soul

*continued from front*

losing by six runs and the game is in the eighth inning. He can be on our team and we'll try to put him up to bat in the ninth inning."

Shaya's father was ecstatic as Shaya smiled broadly. Shaya was told to put on a glove and go out to play short center field. In the bottom of the eighth inning, Shaya's team scored a few runs but was still behind by three. In the bottom of the ninth inning, Shaya's team scored again and now with two outs and the bases loaded with the potential winning run on base, Shaya was scheduled to be up. Would the team actually let Shaya bat at this juncture and give away their chance to win the game?

Surprisingly, Shaya was given the bat. Everyone knew that Shaya didn't even know how to hold the bat properly, let alone hit with it. However, as Shaya stepped up to the plate, the pitcher moved a few steps to lob the ball in softly so Shaya should at least be able to make contact. The first pitch came in and Shaya swung clumsily and missed. One of Shaya's team-mates came up to Shaya and together they held the bat and faced the pitcher waiting for the next pitch. The pitcher again took a few steps forward to toss the ball softly toward Shaya.

As the pitch came in, Shaya and his team-mate swung the bat and together they hit a slow ground ball to the pitcher. The pitcher picked up the soft grounder and could easily have thrown the ball

to the first baseman. Shaya would have been out and that would have ended the game. Instead, the pitcher took the ball and threw it on a high arc to right field, far beyond reach of the first baseman. Everyone started yelling, "Shaya, run to first. Run to first!" Never in his life had Shaya run to first. He scampered down the baseline wide eyed and startled. By the time he reached first base, the right fielder had the ball. Instead of throwing the ball to second base, he tossed the ball high and far over the third baseman's head.

Everyone yelled, "Run to second, run to second!" Shaya ran towards second base as the runners ahead of him deliriously circled the bases towards home. As Shaya reached second base, the opposing short stop ran to him, turned him in the direction of third base and shouted, "Run to third!" As Shaya rounded third, the boys from both teams ran behind him screaming, "Shaya run home!" Shaya ran home, stepped on home plate and all eighteen boys lifted him on their shoulders and made him the hero, as he had just hit a "grand slam" and won the game for his team.

"That day," said the father softly with tears now rolling down his face, and down the faces of everyone in the audience, "those eighteen boys reached their level of God's perfection."

*Adapted with permission from ShulWeek by Rabbi Boruch Lederman*