

Parsha Ponders

Vayeira | Nov 14, 2024 | 14 Marcheshvan 5785

*Dust and ash*¹

ויען אברהם ויאמר הנה-נא הואלתי לדבר אל-אדני ואנכי עפר ואפר

Avraham answered and said, “Behold, now I have begun to speak to the Lord. I am but dirt and ash”²

Our Sages tell us³ that in the merit that Avraham called himself “but dirt and ash”, his descendants were given the *mitzvos* of the dirt of the *Sotah* procedure⁴ and the ash of the *Parah Adumah*, the Red Heifer⁵. Now, it’s true, we see that Avraham said dirt and ash, and these two *mitzvos* are with dirt and ash. Still, is there any deeper significance with this reward?

What do dirt and ash have in common? They are both worth very little in the eyes of people. They are both low in value and very lowly. It would be quite reasonable to assume that these mere things cannot be used to get close to G-d. Why would G-d be interested in these things? However, the Torah indeed commands us. In fact, this is teaching us the opposite. We are to serve Hashem with anything we can, in whatever way we can, even with the lowliest and most worthless of things.

Avraham teaches us a similar lesson. He considered himself “but dirt and ash”. One wouldn’t be surprised then if he would just give up all hope of connecting to Hashem. What’s the point? Why would Hashem be interested in such a lowly creature? That’s a mistake. Avraham teaches us that despite his humility, he knew his potential. He knew that he did have a chance to connect with the Almighty. He served Hashem the best he could, without reservations.

Sometimes we feel pretty low ourselves. Our self esteem isn’t as great as it could be. What’s the significance of my prayers? Why should my *mitzvos* make a difference? The answer is that no, it does make a difference. Avraham truly believed he was “but dirt and ash”, and yet, just like the *Sotah* dirt and Red Heifer ash, nothing is insignificant. Anything can be used and anyone can serve Hashem, regardless of how lowly they may seem. In reality, their potential to connect to the Divine is limitless.

Good Shabbos

¹ Based on [Toras Chaim](#) to [Chullin](#) 88b, with additions heard from [Rav Chezky Lang](#)

² [Genesis](#) 18:27

³ [Chullin](#) *loc. cit.*

⁴ [Numbers](#) 5:13

⁵ [Ibid](#) Chapter 19