



state, known as “*tevul yom*” (literally: “immersed of the day”). While his state of purity has improved from his immersion, he remains a *tevul yom* until nightfall, at which point he has basically regained full purity status. In any event, what the Sages derived was that a *tevul yom* – although not having attained the highest level of ritual purity – is nevertheless qualified to handle the *Parah Adumah*. But since this leniency was arrived at via the orally-transmitted rules of exegesis, it was not accepted by the Tzedukim. The bottom line here is that the Tzedukim did not rely on the leniency expounded by the Sages. The Sages’ response to this situation is recorded in the Mishnah (*Parah 3:7*):

מטמאים היו הכהן השורף את הפרה ומטבילין אותו להוציא מלבן של צדוקים שהיו אומרים במערבי שמי  
היתה נעשית.

“(The Sages) would specifically cause the *kohein* designated to burn the *Parah* to become impure, such that he would immerse in a *mikveh* (and resume the preparations of the ashes on that very day, while still a *tevul yom*. They did so) in order to ‘take away from the heart of the Tzedukim’ who maintained it was necessary (for the *kohein*) to wait until nightfall before dealing with the preparations.”

This idea – explains R’ Ya’akov Barit (19th-century Rosh Yeshivah in Vilna) – actually illuminates the familiar and cherished practice of lighting Shabbos candles. As stated at the outset, the whole notion of lights on Shabbos was likewise a matter through which the Tzedukim exhibited their disdain for the Oral Law. They refused to accept the rabbis’ interpretation of the *pesukim*, following instead their understanding of the verses’ literal meaning. As such, they did not have any lights burning over the course of Shabbos – not even if they were ignited before Shabbos began.

Thus, we can understand the mitzvah of lighting the Shabbos candles (“*bentching licht*”) as mirroring the Sages’ efforts in instances like the *Parah Adumah*. That is, we are aiming specifically to discount the position of the misguided Tzedukim – “*l’hotzi miliban shel Tzedukim*.” They maintained that Shabbos must be a dark experience, devoid of any kindled lights. And so we do just the opposite: we demonstrate our fealty to rabbinic authority and acceptance of their interpretation by specifically igniting lights before Shabbos, to provide illumination even once Shabbos begins.

The *sefer Ma’aseh Rav* records many of the customs and practices of the venerated Vilna Ga’on. One of these relates to this mitzvah, as the Ga’on was particular to light an abundance of candles. R’ Shlomo Hakohein – disciple of the aforementioned R’ Ya’akov Barit – explained this practice in light of the above. That is, being that a major function of these lights was to publicize the rabbinic position, it was done in grand style, so to speak – through a profusion of light-giving candles (*Peninim MiShulchan Gavohah, parshas Vayakhel*).

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