



בסייעתא דשמיא / פרשת וירא תשפ"א / Parshas Vayeira

“ויען אברהם ויאמר הנה נא הואלתי לדבר אל ד' ואנכי עפר ואפר” בראשית יח:כז

“Avraham answered and said “Behold now, I desire to speak to Hashem although I am but dust and ash”  
Bereishis 18:27

When Avraham Avinu stood before Hashem in this week's Parsha to pray for the salvage of Sodom, he uttered the timeless adage “I am but dust and ash.” Rashi explains that Avraham intended to refer to the miracles that Hashem had performed for him. For Avraham should have been ground into dust in the battle with the four kings and turned to ash as a result of the fires of אור כשדים into which he had been cast by Nimrod. According to Rashi, Avraham is referencing Hashem's mercy towards him in his prayer for the people of Sodom.

The Bais Halevi as well brings a beautiful explanation as to Avraham Avinu's humble attitude. He explains that Avraham's humility was complete in all aspects. Avraham at first compares himself to עפר - dirt, which never had any importance nor served any past purpose. Dirt is mainly implemented to mold into vessels or to plant seeds with which to grow great things. אפר – ash, on the other hand, is the remains of something that once was, which has now been rendered useless and obsolete. It can no longer be compounded or sustain growth. Avraham Avinu viewed himself as inconsequential on both accounts. That he had never been anything important in the past and that nothing vital stood to come from him in the future. With this understanding we can explain the Gemara in Maseches Chulin (פח:) that Avraham's reward for saying “ואנכי עפר ואפר” was the עפר סוטה and the אפר פרה. For the ashes of the Red Heifer serve to purify the impure from now into the future, while the dirt of the Sotah is meant to clarify whether or not an event occurred in the past. Both of these rewards correlate directly to the words of Avraham. (מדה כנגד מדה)

Humility is key. What's more, if we put together Rashi and the Bais Halevi, Avraham may very well have been excused to think of himself as great; after all, Hashem did perform these miracles for his sake. Nonetheless, Avraham experienced these life-saving episodes by the hands of Hashem and used them only to further his level of ענוה and modesty. With the proper outlook, we too can begin to understand that when we experience miracles (as we all do in our daily lives), they are not meant to boost our egos and fuel our pride, rather to humble us and serve as reminders that Hashem is above, protecting us constantly through His endless mercy.