

Chukas

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Light points

FROM THE TEACHINGS OF
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Lightpoints
לזיכרון ולעילוי נשמת
הרה"ח הרה"ת
הר"ר ישעי' זושא
ב"ר אברהם דוד ע"ה ווילהעלם
נלב"ע ביום ד' שבט ה'תשפ"ב
תנצב"ה



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חַקַּת Chukas

יט:ב | 19:2

זאת חַקַּת התּוֹרָה אֲשֶׁר צִוָּה ה' לֵאמֹר דַּבֵּר אֶל
בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיִּקְחוּ אֵלֶיךָ פָּרָה אֲדָמָה

This is the decree of the Torah that G-d commanded to say: Speak to Bnei Yisrael, and have them take to you a red heifer.

Irrational Judaism

The Torah commands us to use the ashes of a parah adumah, a red heifer, to ritually purify people or articles that have contracted impurity from a human corpse. The mitzvah of parah adumah is classified by the Torah as a chok, a decree that transcends reason. Indeed, King Shlomo, wisest of men, said, "All of the Torah's commandments I have comprehended. But the chapter of the red heifer, though I have examined, questioned and searched, 'I thought to be wise [in it], but it is distant from me.'"¹

1. Koheles 7:23; Bamidbar Rabbah 19:5.

This mitzvah is characterized by its uniqueness as the ultimate chok, yet the Torah introduces its laws with the words “This is the decree of the Torah,” thereby associating the entire Torah with this single inexplicable commandment. In doing so, the Torah teaches us that the inexplicableness that characterizes the mitzvah of parah adumah is actually common to all the mitzvos, which are, in essence, expressions of G-d’s will—what G-d wills simply because He so wills. Their relevance is therefore not defined by logic and reason—even Divine reason. Granted, G-d desired that some of the mitzvos should also “descend” to the realm of reason, and He therefore gave them rational significance as well. At their core, however, even the rational mitzvos are chukim, decreed by G-d’s will; their ultimate purpose transcends all reason.

This explains why G-d did not reveal the reason for the parah adumah even to the wisest of men. If every aspect of the Torah were logically explicable, then the always-rational Jew would be at a loss when the fulfillment of a mitzvah would require self-sacrifice—a demand that is inherently irrational. The mitzvah of parah adumah is deliberately inexplicable, and at the same time associates the entire Torah with its mysteriousness, because the chok element of parah adumah serves as the basis for our uncalculated devotion to all the Torah’s commands.

—Likkutei Sichos, vol. 18, pp. 230–232

 יט:ב | 19:2

וַיִּקְחוּ אֵלָיו פָּרָה אֲדָמָה תְּמִימָה

They shall take to you a perfectly red heifer.

Is Death Final? Depends Whom You Ask

The Torah commands us to use the ashes of a parah adumah, a red heifer, for the ritual purification of people or articles that have contracted impurity from a human corpse. The Torah assigns this mitzvah to Moshe, emphasizing that Bnei Yisrael must bring the red heifer to him, even though the ashes were actually prepared by Elazar. Similarly, the Midrash states that Moshe alone understood the true purpose of this mitzvah.²

Moshe's devotion to G-d was characterized by permanence—nothing in the world could cause his commitment to G-d to waver or weaken. As a result, everything associated with Moshe is everlasting.³ For example, the Mishkan that Moshe built was hidden away, and was never destroyed by enemy hands. Even regarding Moshe himself, the Talmud states matter-of-factly, "Moshe never died. It is written, 'Moshe died there,' and elsewhere it is written, 'He was there with G-d.' Just as in the latter passage Moshe was standing and serving, so does the former mean that he is standing and serving."⁴ Likewise, according to the Midrash, the ashes of Moshe's parah adumah outlasted all the others. When ashes of a new parah

 2. See Tanchuma, Chukas 8.

3. See Talmud, Sotah 9a.

4. Sotah 13b.

adumah were made in later generations, the Kohen involved in their preparation would first be purified using ashes from Moshe's parah adumah.⁵

This explains why the mitzvah of parah adumah, more so than any other mitzvah, is attributed to Moshe. In order for the parah adumah to remove the impurity caused by a human corpse, it must undo, to some degree, the cause of the impurity—death itself. This purification was therefore intrinsically connected to Moshe, who represents permanence, perpetuity and immortality.

—Likkutei Sichos, vol. 33, pp. 127–130

5. Tanchuma, *ibid.*

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וַיִּקְחוּ אֵלֶיךָ פָּרָה אֲדָמָה תְּמִימָה

They shall take to you a perfectly red heifer.

The Cow and the Calf

The ashes of the parah adumah were used for the ritual purification of people or things that had contracted impurity from a human corpse. In order to remove this impurity, the parah adumah must undo, to some degree, the root cause of the impurity—death itself.

The Midrash teaches that the offering of the parah adumah atones for the sin of the Golden Calf: “Let the cow come and atone for the calf.”⁶ The commentaries explain that at the giving of the Torah, Bnei Yisrael were “freed from the clutches of the angel of death,”⁷ but their immortality was taken from them when they worshipped the Golden Calf. Accordingly, by atoning for the sin that caused death, the parah adumah also undoes the impurity that death imparts.⁸

This explains why, in his Laws of Parah Adumah, the Rambam records the number of red heifers ever used for spiritual purification, emphasizing that the one prepared by Moshiach will be the tenth.⁹

The number ten in Jewish thought symbolizes completeness and perfection.¹⁰ The Rambam thus hints that the com-

6. Tanchuma, Chukas 8.

7. See Shemos Rabbah 32:1.

8. See Kli Yakar and Alshich, Bamidbar 19:2.

9. Mishneh Torah, Hil. Parah Adumah 3:4.

10. See Ibn Ezra, Shemos 3:15.

pleteness of this mitzvah will be achieved only in the era of Moshiach, when the sin of the Golden Calf will be entirely forgiven, and “death will be swallowed up forever.”¹¹ As such, the tenth and final parah adumah will purify us not only from the effects of death, but from death itself.

—Likkutei Sichos, vol. 33, pp. 127–128

11. Yeshayahu 25:8.

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וַיִּקְחוּ אֵלֶיךָ פָּרָה אֲדֻמָּה תְּמִימָה

They shall take to you a perfectly red heifer.

Living on Edge

The Rambam's compendium of Jewish law, the Mishneh Torah, is famous for its precise wording and organization. It is therefore surprising and most unusual that in the midst of a discussion on the laws of the parah adumah, the ashes of the red heifer that were used for ritual purification, the Rambam interrupts with a prayer for the immediate revelation of Moshiach.

In the Laws of Parah Adumah, the Rambam writes:

Nine red heifers were offered from the time that they were commanded to fulfill this mitzvah until the destruction of the Second Temple. The first was brought by Moshe. The second was brought by Ezra. Seven others were offered until the destruction of the Temple. And the tenth will be brought by the King Moshiach, may he speedily be revealed. Amen, so may it be G-d's will.¹²

What place is there for a wishful prayer in the middle of a text on Jewish law? Moreover, it is not written into a discussion about the laws relating to the coming of Moshiach, but in the midst of an entirely different topic!

Evidently, with his "spontaneous" prayer the Rambam intended to teach us yet another law, the fulfillment of which is expressed by such spontaneity.

12. Mishneh Torah, Hil. Parah Adumah 3:4.

In his Laws of Kings the Rambam writes that belief in the future redemption of the Jewish people through Moshiach, as well as constantly longing for his arrival, is a fundamental principle of Jewish faith.¹³ The obligation to yearn for Moshiach, not only conceptually but also emotionally, means that a Jew must sense that the redemption is a critical need: without it, his life is severely lacking. He therefore anxiously awaits the coming of Moshiach, so much so that the mere mention of the topic is deeply emotional.

This explains why the Rambam inserted the prayer for the immediate revelation of Moshiach specifically in the midst of an entirely unrelated set of laws, merely upon the mention of the word Moshiach. In this way, the Rambam demonstrated that our intense yearning for the Redemption must be such that the mere mention of Moshiach triggers heartfelt prayers for his immediate arrival—may he speedily be revealed. Amen, so may it be G-d's will.

—Likkutei Sichos, vol. 28, pp. 135–136

13. Mishneh Torah, Hil. Melachim 11:1.

לעילוי נשמת
הרה"ת הרה"ח שלמה שניאור זלמן ע"ה ב"ר מיכאל הי"ד
קייזן
גלב"ע ביום ח' תמוז ה'תשע"א
תנצב"ה
נדפס ע"י בני משפחתו שיחיו

לעילוי נשמת
מרת מרים יודית בת ר' ראובן ע"ה לייקין
גלב"ע ביום י' תמוז ה'תשנ"ג
תנצב"ה
נדפס ע"י חתנה הרה"ת אייל וזוגתו מרת גאלדא ומשפחתם שיחיו
בן ציון

לעילוי נשמת
מרת מרגריט בת ר' יצחק מעתוק
ע"ה
דואק
גלב"ע ביום י"ד תמוז ה'תשע"ה
תנצב"ה
נדפס ע"י הרה"ת דוד ליב
חוגתו מרת מגי אביגיל שיחיו
ראגאצקי

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