



Yesodos m' ha Sedra

LESSONS IN HASHKAFA & HALACHA FROM THE PARSHA

פ ר ש ת ח ק ת

זאת התורה וכו'

The oft-quoted words of *Chazal*, '*ein divrei Torah miskayem elah b'mi sheh-meimis es atzmoh aleihem*' means that Torah endures only when someone 'kills himself' over it. This appears to be in stark contrast with another dictum of *Chazal* - '*v'chai bahem - v'lo she'yamos bahem*' (one should live with [the *mitzvos* of the *Torah*] - and not die with them). How can we reconcile this apparent contradiction?

The **S'fas Emes** contends that there is no contradiction. Each statement is independently true in all cases. A *yid's* responsibility in *avodas Hashem* is to approach every piece of *limud haTorah* and every single *mitzvah* with dedication and *mesiras nefesh*. Only then can he possibly succeed. This is his responsibility. Nevertheless, with a few exceptions, Hashem does not demand nor want that he should actually give up his life. This in no way detracts from the level of intensity and dedication which he needs to exhibit in order to properly succeed.

זאת חקת התורה וכו':

The purification process using the ashes of the *parah adumah* serves as the paradigm of a *chok* - a *mitzvah* that defies logic: While it is only with these ashes that one who has contracted *tumas meis*, can be purified, those involved in preparing the ashes become defiled. Counter-intuitive indeed. The *Torah* however does not refer to *Parah Adumah* as "*chukas ha-Tumah*", but rather as



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chukas ha-Torah, implying that its lesson is to be applied to the entire *Torah* and not just to *taharos* and transfer of impurities.

The **Baal Shem Tov** notes that *Chazal* speak of a similar concept with regards to *Torah* study in general: Although one should aim to learn *Torah* and perform *mitzvos* "*lishmah*" - with the purest intentions, *Chazal* tell us that save for cruel or sadistic motivations, one should always perform *mitzvos* "*sheh lo lishmah*" - for other reasons as this will eventually lead him to do so with the purest of intentions. This means that one may learn *Torah* so that people will view him as a *talmid chacham* and respect and honor him. This is an acceptable approach to self motivation. However, he may only do so as a means of self motivation. Once he becomes a *talmid chacham*, pursuing honor and recognition is subject to a different dictum of *Chazal*; that pursuit of honor is one of three things that remove a person from the world. Performing *mitzvos* for ulterior motivations helps at first, but can become detrimental. Indeed, seeking honor is "*m'taheir temeim and metamei tehorim*". Although it might not make sense, this is a "*chok*" of the *Torah*!

This is an important lesson in *chinuch* - not only as teachers or parents, but for ourselves as well. Initially, most of us are not motivated to learn or do *mitzvos* completely *l'sheim shomayim*. Instead, we do what we do because of reward (on one level or another), anticipation of recognition, social pressures, or a combination of the above. However, eventually we must develop the recognition that this is not what it is all about. Our goal should become



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maintaining a healthy balance between self esteem and doing things for the real, right reasons.

זאת חקת התורה וכו':

Parah Adumah is the one mitzvah whose logic escapes us. How this purification process works and why it is that those involved in producing the ashes to make others tahor should become tamei is something that Shlomo HaMelech, the wisest of men grappled with his entire life. It is indeed the paradigm of a “chok” - a mitzvah which lacks human understanding. Many of the commentaries point out that the posuk should better read “zos chukas ha'parah” (these are the statutes of the red heifer) and not “zos chukas ha'Torah”. After all, we are addressing a single mitzvah here, not the entire Torah.

HaRav Gedalya Schorr zt”l suggests the following: In truth, every single mitzvah offers us a lesson and insight into all other mitzvos. For example, we find that when the Torah tells us “u'shmartem es ha'matzos” (you shall guard the matzos - i.e. from becoming chometz), Chazal tell us to read it as “mitzvos” and just as one must bake matzos with alacrity to prevent it from becoming chometz, one must approach all mitzvos with zerizus and perform them without delay. When we say that we do not understand parah adumah, we are implying that we do understand other mitzvos. While this may be true on a certain level, we must know that we can never fully understand the reasons behind any



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single mitzvah. To drive this point home, the Torah tells us “zos chukas ha'Torah” - this chok is not about the parah adumah. It is about the entire Torah. Just as we cannot claim to understand the parah adumah, we cannot claim to fully understand any mitzvah of the Torah.

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Parah Adumah is the one *mitzvah* whose logic escapes us. How this purification process works and why it is that those involved in producing the ashes to make others *tahor* should become *tamei* is something that *Shlomo HaMelech*, the wisest of men grappled with his entire life. It is indeed the paradigm of a “*chok*” - a *mitzvah* which lacks human understanding. Many of the commentaries point out that the *posuk* should better read “zos chukas ha'parah” (these are the statutes of the red heifer) and not “zos chukas ha'Torah”. After all, we are addressing a single *mitzvah* here, not the entire *Torah*.

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וַיַּךְ אֶת הַסֵּלַע וְכוּ'...

So what if *Moshe Rabeinu* hit the rock instead of speaking to it? True, the *Kiddush Hashem* may have been so much greater had he spoken to the rock instead, however it would seem that the rock's supplying *k'lal Yisroel* with water was a great feat in and of itself. What was so wrong with *Moshe Rabeinu's* action that it warranted such a punishment?

HaRav Moshe Feinstein zt"l suggests that the punishment was not so much for hitting the rock per se, but rather for the lost opportunity to convey a vital message to *k'lal Yisroel*. Had *Moshe* obeyed *Hashem* and continued to orally command the rock to give forth water, it would have made a more significant impression.

Violence can always produce forced results. The fact that the rock flowed with water after being beaten doesn't necessarily reflect positively upon the one who issued the decree. Words, on the other hand, if they are not especially



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inspiring, cannot bring about results. *D'var Hashem* has the *ko'ach*, to effect change. It has the ability to inspire and to move even the most obstinate; even a rock. Words of *Torah*, if repeated enough, will ultimately penetrate deep enough to bring about results. *Moshe Rabeinu's* delivery of water by other means preempted the lesson of this innate power of *Torah*.