

The
CHASSIDUS
PERSPECTIVE
with Reb Yoel Kahn



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A SHEPHERD AND HIS FLOCK

As is known, there are two categories of *mitzvos*: those that can be understood, and *chukim*—*mitzvos* whose reasons we do not comprehend. Among *chukim*, the *mitzvah* of *parah adumah* is the most far-removed from our grasp. In fact, Shlomo Hamelech stated that he was able to understand every *chok*, except for *parah adumah*.

Nonetheless, the Midrash tells us that Hashem revealed the reason of *parah adumah* to Moshe Rabbeinu.

CHUKIM IN THE LEAD

Chukim possess a certain advantage that is not found in logical *mitzvos*: they express a person's *kabolas ol* and *bittul* to Hashem. When a person fulfills a logical *mitzvah*, it is based to some degree on *his* understanding. By contrast, when he does not understand a *mitzvah* and fulfills it anyway, it is clear that he is only doing it because Hashem commanded.

This is one of the reasons why *chukim* is related to the word *chakikah*, engraving. Unlike written script, where the ink and the paper are two entities (and are merely joined together), engraved script is part and parcel of the stone itself. Similarly, when a Jew performs a *mitzvah* with *kabolas ol*, it is etched into his identity in a much deeper way than when he performs a *mitzvah* based on his understanding.

It is assumed that the opposite is true: when a person understands a *mitzvah*, he connects to it much more than when he fulfills it just because that is what Hashem wants. However, this is not correct. The essence of a Jew is his *bittul* to Hashem; intellectual comprehension is merely an added element. Therefore, fulfilling a *mitzvah* with *bittul*, *chukim*, is engraved into his existence—*chakikah*.

This raises a question: Does this mean that Moshe was lacking the advantage of *chukim*? When it comes to Shlomo Hamelech, although he understood the reasons of *chukim*, at least one

chok (*parah adumah*) remained beyond his grasp. But Moshe understood each *mitzvah*, including *parah adumah*. How did he have the unique element expressed through *chukim*?

THE TRUE MOSHE

The Rebbe explains in a *maamar* the greatness of Moshe Rabbeinu: he was wealthy in both a material and spiritual sense, and he was on the level of *da'as elyon*, which is associated with *atik*. The Rebbe concludes that despite his spiritual greatness, his primary element was that he was a *roeh Yisroel*, the faithful shepherd of Bnei Yisroel. With a faithful shepherd, his flock is not a secondary part of his life—they are who he truly is. All of Moshe's other qualities were merely external aspects compared to his inner essence—his flock.

Therefore, when Bnei Yisroel were lacking something, it's not just that he felt their pain until it was *as if* he was lacking it as well. Rather, since they were lacking, he was actually lacking too!

One might posit that there are two dimensions here: as far as Moshe himself was concerned, he possessed all these lofty levels, but in his role as *roeh Yisroel*, he was lacking. But this is not the accurate perspective. In truth, there is just one dimension—Moshe's position as *roeh Yisroel*, as that was

his essence. Therefore, the lofty levels he possessed were all externalities, while his lacking was internal and real.

Moshe understood each *mitzvah*, including *parah adumah*. Does this mean he was missing the advantage of *chukim*?

WAS IT REALLY DARK?

The same is true regarding the *ispashtusa deMoshe* in every generation: the true existence of a Jewish leader is his flock, and all his spiritual achievements are merely external.

This can help us understand a concept related to the Alter Rebbe's imprisonment.

It is known that the Alter Rebbe's incarceration led to an ascent, and he was able to attain greater heights as a result. The reason for this is because "An increase in light comes from darkness": the darkness of the imprisonment led to a greater measure of light.

We also know that anything that happens to great *tzaddikim* occurs only with their consent. We see this in particular with the Alter Rebbe's arrest: On the way to Petersburg, the Alter Rebbe wanted to stop Friday at midday, but the commanding officer did not agree. Subsequently, the axles broke, then a wheel fell off, and so on, until the officer was forced to stop. (The Alter Rebbe applied to this event the words of Azamer Bishvachin, *Tzvachin af aksin*: the axles "called out" and did not agree to travel further.)

Now, since the Alter Rebbe was only imprisoned because he agreed to it, the darkness it entailed was not that terrible. The ascent that resulted, however, was very real. How is it that a superficial darkness led to a genuine ascent?

The answer is that although for the Alter Rebbe himself the darkness was superficial, for the chassidim, by contrast, it was very real. Since the Alter Rebbe's true existence was his flock, the darkness was real for him too. True, he was only imprisoned with his consent, and therefore, from his perspective, his confinement was insignificant. However, all this was only an external element. His primary being was his chassidim, and since it was dark for them, his imprisonment truly bothered him too.

THE REBBE'S TRUE EXISTENCE—TODAY

We can now understand how Moshe had the advantage of *chukim*. Although he knew the reason of *parah adumah*, since for Bnei Yisroel—his true existence—it was a *chok*, it was a

chok for Moshe as well, and the fact that he knew the reason was only an external aspect.

We can further apply this explanation of the Rebbe to the concept of a *tzaddik's* passing. It is known that even after his passing, a *roeh Yisroel* does not forsake his flock. One might understand this to mean that despite the myriad levels of Gan Eden he now attains, he doesn't forget about his followers, and he continues to think about them, pray for them, and arouse mercy for them.

However, this is not an accurate description. It's not that *despite* his present level, he *still* thinks about his flock. On the contrary: His current elevations are external, and his care for his flock is who he really is.

For further study, see *maamar d"h Zos Chukas Hatorah* 5729.

When Bnei Yisroel were lacking something, Moshe didn't just feel their pain until it was as *if* he was lacking it; rather, he was *actually* lacking it.



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