



Chukas – Just Because it Is Right



Parshas Chukas opens with the laws about the Parah Aduma, the Red Heifer. This commandment serves as a quintessential illustration of a chok. Although the complete understanding of all mitzvos in the Torah is beyond human grasp, there are reasons and insights into these mitzvos that we can understand. For instance, the prohibition against murder is comprehensible on a basic societal level. Society cannot endure if individuals were to kill one another. In contrast, a chok is a mitzva whose rationale is entirely beyond human comprehension. This mitzva is carried out solely because it is a command from Hashem.

The concept of chukim (the plural form of chok) is a significant life lesson. Frequently, individuals find themselves in circumstances where the appropriate action is either challenging or perceived by others as antiquated or superfluous. There are instances when the correct path does not resonate with the individual undertaking it or may even seem illogical. The Torah's message is that the correctness of an action is independent of a person's understanding of the reasons behind it.

Doing What's Right

What does it take to maintain resilience and act correctly even when one is reluctant to do so, or when others around you are acting in opposition or, worse, mock you for making the right choice? The first step involves an individual having a solid conviction in the legitimacy of their actions. Most people possess a strong desire to be correct. One of the reasons it is difficult to extend an apology to another individual is that it requires acknowledging that one was wrong. Consequently, the stronger a person's conviction in the justness of their actions, the easier it becomes for them to remain steadfast against the remarks and viewpoints of others.

The greater a person's commitment to their beliefs, the greater their confidence will be when faced with subsequent challenges to their moral integrity, allowing them to respond appropriately. It is a well-established fact that to develop muscle strength, an individual must repeatedly engage that specific muscle over an extended period. Similarly, this principle applies to our 'decision-making capacity'. The sounder decisions a person makes, the more adept they will become at making sound decisions in the future.

Accepting Without Understanding

In today's society, people have become accustomed to only doing things that they understand or that make sense to themselves. People rely on the 'everybody does it' for their financial ethics. If a person understands a rule or law, they will follow it; however, if it is something they don't understand, many people feel it is up to them whether or not to comply. Yet, a person who wants to live with solid convictions must accept that there are things they may not understand. They are willing to accept that there are things they don't understand but must do them anyway.

There are numerous aspects that individuals regard as fact, irrespective of their comprehension of the underlying concepts or rules. Using the human body as a case in point, there exist various functions within the human brain that remain unexplained by science. We recognize the brain's



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potential, even though we do not possess a comprehensive understanding of its mechanisms. Although the majority of people cannot describe how to create a nuclear bomb, we acknowledge that it is possible. This same principle should be applied to every aspect of life. The acceptance of something as fact should not, and indeed must not, rely solely on an individual's understanding.

A Person's Responsibility

The notion that understanding is not essential for action does not release a person from the obligation to utilize their intellect to explore and grasp the rationale behind the correctness of an action. People are not intended to operate as automatons. In fact, living life in a mindless manner, simply carrying out actions, will lead to an existence that is empty and lacking in purpose. This, in turn, is likely to create a psychological barrier to consistently doing what is right. If life lacks purpose, then an individual's actions hold no significance.

It is the responsibility of an individual to delve into and scrutinize ethical and moral teachings to gain a comprehensive understanding of the path and direction they ought to follow in life. An individual has a duty to themselves to consider and understand every action they engage in. However, they must recognize that the human mind has limitations and may not fully understand the justification for every specific action being necessary or appropriate. Leading a life of significance involves acknowledging that there are universal truths grounded in a higher authority.

In the same way that people accept the existence of rules in games, in soccer, a player may find it easier to score by picking up the ball with their hands; however, such a goal would not count. Life also operates under certain rules. Just as the concept of the Red Heifer eludes human understanding, it remains imperative to fulfill its requirements. In a similar vein, we ought to assess each of our actions through this lens, committing to what is right even when we lack understanding of the underlying reasons.

Have a wonderful Shabbos,

Binyomin Stolov



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