Points to Ponder

Chukas 5782

**זֹ֚את חֻקַּ֣ת הַתּוֹרָ֔ה This is the Chok of the Torah (19:2)** - What does the Torah mean that this is the Chok of the TORAH? This is the Chok of Parah Adumah perhaps, but not the entire Torah? **Rav Moshe Feinstein ztl.** explained that just like when it comes to Parah Adumah so it is in regard to the Torah. In other words, just like when it comes to Parah Adumah one needs to display a sense of humility (we see the use of Eizov, of dependence on others in the Tahara process etc.) and a sense of communal obligation (the preparation of the ashes require dedication of the individual for the benefit of the people in each step), so it is in regard to the lessons of the rest of the Torah. They too, need humility and communal dedication.

**זֹ֚את הַתּוֹרָ֔ה אָדָ֖ם כִּֽי־יָמ֣וּת בְּאֹ֑הֶל This is the Torah when a person dies in the tent (19:14)** - The Gemara (Brachos 63b) notes אין דברי תורה מתקיימים אלא במי שממית עצמו עליה. Why isn’t it enough to learn well without killing oneself over it? The Rambam (Hilchos Talmud Torah 3:6) writes that to really attain the crown of Torah, you have to be fully dedicated to Torah. ממית עצמו means that you have to kill the physical aspect of oneself and let the spiritual aspect take over. The **Maharal** expands on this, noting the Torah is a spiritual entity while man is a physical entity – two opposing forces. The only way to ensure one’s Torah study remains a permanent acquisition is to subdue the body’s physical pleasure and promote one’s spirit as the driving force. **Rav Dovid Hofstetder Shlita** adds that this is what it means to “kill oneself” over Torah learning – to subdue one’s physical nature.

**מַ֥יִם חַיִּ֖ים אֶל־כֶּֽלִי Live waters to the utensil (19:23) - Rav Meir Shapiro ztl.** noted that Bnei Yisrael are compared to water. We have the power to crush rocks and level mountains but that presupposes that we are still moving. Frozen water is still. It lacks the ability to make any impact.

**יַ֚עַן לֹא־הֶֽאֱמַנְתֶּ֣ם בִּ֔י Since you didn’t believe in me to sanctify me (20:12)** - Why was this an issue of belief? And is it true that Moshe didn’t BELIEVE? **Rav Shaul Yisraeli ztl** cited the **Alter of Novardok** who explained that Moshe was interested in Kiddush Hashem but he assumed Bnei Yisrael could not accept a Kiddush Hashem in word – only in action. But that was his mistake – they WERE ready to hear and accept and work – based on that faith.

**וְהִבִּ֛יט אֶל־נְחַ֥שׁ הַנְּח֖שֶׁת וָחָֽי:And he shall gaze upon the copper snake and live (21:9)-** Usually you need to interact with medicine if it is going to work. Why the difference here? **Rav Schachter Shlita** noted that the Zohar notes that simply by Moshe’s looking at Eretz Yisrael it was as if he fulfilled the Mitzvos HaTiluyos B’Aretz. The same was true here. Simply looking at the snake was enough interaction by the people. This is the comparison of the Zohar. Rav Schachter noted that the people had learned this style of concentration from Moshe’s own level of concentration and were able to achieve great things as a result.

**אָ֚ז יָשִׁ֣יר יִשְׂרָאֵ֔ל** **Then Bnei Yisrael sang (21:17)** - Why is it that at this Shirah Moshe’s name does not appear as it did at Shiras HaYam (Az Yashir)? **Rav Bernard Weinberger ztl.** explained that when they left Mitzrayim, they did not fully comprehend how to properly sing praise to Hashem. After 40 years, they were ready to do so.

**וַיִּשְׁלַ֤ח יִשְׂרָאֵל֙ מַלְאָכִ֔ים אֶל־סִיחֹ֥ן Bnei Yisrael sent messengers to Sichon (21:21)** - The Midrash (Bamidbar Rabba 19:15) explains that even though Moshe knew he wasn’t going into the land he did not stop his job of leading Bnei Yisrael in. However, why is that a praise of Moshe? Wasn’t he doing what Hashem expected? **Rav Chaim Kamil ztl.** explained that Moshe didn’t need to calculate the point. He immediately proceeded because he was so selfless that he only considered the people – not the impact on himself.

Haftara

**אָנֹכִ֕י אֶהְיֶ֥ה לָכֶ֖ם לְרֹֽאשׁ If you accept me as leader over you (Shoftim 11:9) - Chasam Sofer** comments that because Yiftach insisted on becoming leader, with authority like a king, he erred in trying to be like a king. In other words, because he insisted on acceptance of his authority, it happened that when he needed to be able to nullify his neder he was not going to be able to do so.