



RABBI SHALOM

ROSNER

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Parah Aduma and Korban Pesach Two Diametrically Opposed Chukim

Dovid HaMelech requested: יהי לבי תמים – “May my heart be perfect in your statutes” (*Tehillim* 119:80). The Midrash explains that the word “statutes” is in the plural to reflect two statutes (*chukim*). First, the *korban pesach*: It is written “*Zot chukat haPesach*” (*Shemot* 12:43) – “This is the statute of the *korban pesach*.” Second, “*Zot chukat haTorah*” (*Bamidbar* 19:2) is the statute of the *para aduma*.

What is the connection between the *parah aduma* and the *korban pesach*?

Why did Dovid HaMelech pray that his heart be sincere in the fulfillment of both of these statutes specifically?

Contrasting Chukim

Rav Asher Weiss offers an explanation. In the Midrash, there is not a comparison of these two different statutes, but rather, a contrasting. On the Seder night, we are encouraged to ask questions. Those people that are learned delve into an understanding of every nuance in the Haggada. We also do specific acts in order to trigger questions from our children (*Minhat Asher Al HaTorah: Vayikra, Bamidbar, Devarim*, p. 180, and Rav Asher Weiss on the *Haggada*, p. 309). Thus, the *korban pesach* is a symbol for asking questions: asking, searching, studying. For what other mitzva do we

have to state the reason for doing it? We keep saying, *Al shum mah* – “For what reason?” We have to go above and beyond in order to understand and internalize the message and customs of Pesach.

On the other hand, the mitzva of *hukat para aduma* is a mystery. Even Shlomo HaMelech admitted he does not fully understand the reasoning behind the intricacies of the statute of *para aduma* (*Kohelet* 7:23). Yet, even absent a clear understanding we are instructed to fulfill all of the details of *para aduma*.

These two *chukim* represent two approaches to mitzvot. *Hukat haPesach* involves striving to understand, searching, and yearning. *Parah aduma* requires us to accept what HaKadosh Barukh Hu dictates and to perform acts that are beyond our comprehension.

When are we meant to ask and investigate, and when are we meant to humbly accept Hashem’s commandments?

When to Act and When to Question

Rav Asher Weiss suggests we emulate Avraham Avinu. When asked to sacrifice his son Yitzhak, Avraham acts without questioning. He wakes up early in the morning and sets out on his journey. Yet after Avraham binds his son and lifts a knife to slaughter him, an angel calls out to Avraham instructing him to

cease and desist.

At this point, according to the Midrash (*Bereshit Rabba* 56:8, quoted in Rashi, *Bereshit* 22:12), Avraham begins to question. First Hashem says, “Yitzhak will be your heir,” and then He says, “Kill your son.” Now Hashem is commanding me, “Don’t kill him.” What is the meaning of all this?

However, why didn’t Avraham question Hashem’s request immediately? As long as Avraham Avinu had a responsibility to act, he asked no questions. He focused on fulfilling a command. Only after he is instructed to spare his son and no longer has an obligation to complete an action, he inquires more deeply in order to better comprehend Hashem’s intentions.

Naaseh V’nishma

Perhaps that is also the explanation as to why Bnei Yisrael received two crowns for stating *naaseh venishma*. The gemara (Shabbat 88a) tells us that 600,000 angels descended and placed two crowns on the head of each individual at Har Sinai, one crown for having stated *naaseh* and the second for stating *nishma*. Why did we get two crowns? Bnei Yisrael did one great thing: We said *naaseh* before *nishma*. Why did we get a second crown for *nishma*?

The *Minhat Asher* explains that yes, the first thing they did was *naaseh*, that is, *chukat hapara*. We accepted the commandments unconditionally. Then, there was the *hukat haPesach*, and this involved searching, yearning, and trying to understand the messages of the mitzvot. That’s also what Bnei Yisrael committed to do.

Throughout most of the year we observe *chukat hapara*: obedience and unconditional fulfillment of Hashem’s commandments.

On Seder night in particular, we experience *chukat haPesach*, we delve into communal discourse to enhance our understanding of the Hagaddah.

May we be able to fulfill both of these *chukim* – *chukat hapara* and *chukat HaPesach*. Knowing when to act obediently and perform mitzvot and when to question and obtain a deeper understanding of the mitzvot. ■



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