

Chukas

This week's Sedra, Chukas, begins with the Mitzvah of *Parah Adumah*. As an introduction, the Parsha commences with the words, "*Zos Chukas Hatorah*"—"This is the statute of the Torah." The obvious question immediately arises, why is the phrase "*Zos Chukas Hatorah*" used when discussing the Mitzvah of *Parah Adumah* which deals not with the entire Torah but with one particular Mitzvah. Seemingly, it should have stated, "*Zos Chukas Haparah*."

To answer this question, let us preface with understanding the meaning of the word *Chukah*. In addition to the literal meaning of statute, *chukah* is also a form of the Hebrew term for engraving—*Chakika*. By examining the difference between letters which are written with ink on paper and letters which are engraved into stone, we can learn a very essential lesson concerning Torah and Mitzvos.¹

The Torah seeks to tell us that the relationship between a Jew and Torah is similar to letters which are engraved in stone. Unlike words written on paper, where the ink and paper remain two separate entities—ink on paper, words engraved into stone become part of the stone itself. If one so desires, he can remove or erase words written in ink without causing any damage to the paper. Words engraved into stone, however, are not an addition to the stone, but a part of it. Word and stone become totally unified and inseparable; to the extent that one cannot differentiate between them. To remove the letters etched on the stone would mean the destruction of the stone itself.

This is the eternal message and lesson in life which the Torah relates to us. The relationship between a Jew and Torah is likened unto letters which are engraved into stone; a total and all encompassing connection which make the Jew and Torah inseparable. Torah and Yiddishkeit is not a way of life which

is added onto a Jew's being, without which he can survive and live comfortably, but rather a part of his very self. To take Torah away from the Jew would be tantamount to destroying his essence.

We can now understand the reason the Torah uses the phrase "*Zos Chukas Hatorah*" when discussing the mitzvah of *Parah Adumah*. It implies that this concept is of general significance and applies to the entire Torah, not just the Mitzvah of *Parah Adumah*.

Parah Adumah is a *chuka*—a type of mitzvah which is higher than all rationale and deeper than all understanding and yet it is one of the 613 mitzvos. This teaches us that mitzvos are not dependent on any addition or diminution of rationale or reason. Even though some mitzvos can be adaptable to understanding and capable of comprehension by the human mind, they stand on a plateau all of their own, separate, splendid, and unique in their being the *Ratzon* of Hashem which transcends all potential reaches of the human mind. Just as letters engraved into stone can never be removed or changed, for they remain the essence of the substance into which they are engraved, so too all Mitzvos can never be strengthened, negated, or further developed by even the most powerful of arguments, for they always remain the essence and will of the Creator Himself.

FOOTNOTES

1. Likkutei Torah, Bamidbar 56a