



The Greater Washington Community Kollel

# Torah Minute

In memory of *Rabbi Kalman Winter zt"l*

## Parasha Chukas 5773

**"Zos Chukas HaTorah - This is the decree of the Torah"** introduces the famous mitzvah of the Parah Adumah, the Red Heifer. The verses go on to detail the intricate procedure for preparing the ashes and its application to an individual who became impure, through which he would attain purity once again. We understand why the Torah refers to this Mitzvah as a Chok - a word that denotes a decree that does not have a readily understood reason or rationale. Why, however, is it called the "decree of the Torah"? It would seem more appropriate to call it the "decree of the Red Heifer" or the "decree of the law of purity" as, for instance, we find with regard to the Pascal Lamb - "this is the Chok of the Pesach offering".

Our sages identified the esoteric mitzvah of the Parah Adumah, its laws and procedures, as the quintessential Chok. In fact, King Solomon, the wisest of all men, whose wisdom the Medrash tells us, was as vast as the sands of the seashore and equivalent to the wisdom of the entire nation of Israel, when confronted with his inability to discern the reasons for this law, exclaimed, "I said I would be wise, but it is far from me" (Proverbs 7:23). Rabbi Baruch Sorotzkin explains that King Solomon realized that it wasn't just this Mitzvah that defied his comprehension, but rather that the laws of the Red Heifer testified and revealed by extension that all the Mitzvos of G-d transcended his intellect. King Solomon understood that G-d's commandments were not rooted in human experience and limited to the finite comprehension of man. Rather, they are sourced in the Divine, an absolute expression of the most profound wisdom of G-d himself.

It is perhaps for this very reason that the Torah calls this Mitzvah of Para Adumah the "decree of the Torah" for through it we are taught that although we strive to understand G-d's laws and Mitzvos, as we should, we must resist the hubris to assume a complete comprehension. And certainly, we mustn't deride or dismiss any of G-d's Mitzvos simply because they don't "make sense" to us, for our lack of comprehension is indicative only of our own intellectual fetters and constraints. The story is told of a police officer on his beat, walking down a city street late at night. He saw a man crouched on all fours under a street lamp. The officer inquired of the fellow about his strange behavior and the man told him that he had lost his keys. The officer persisted and asked him, "Do you know that you lost your keys in this spot?" The man answered, "No. But this is where the light is." It is tempting to limit our understanding to our own personal "street lamp". We can, however, open our hearts and minds to a celestial and sublime wisdom lovingly given to us from Above.

*Have a great Shabbos,  
Rabbi Menachem Winter*