

Discourse 20

“*Zot Chukat HaTorah... -
This is the decree of the Torah...*”

Delivered on Shabbat Parshat Tisa,
Parshat Parah, 18th of Adar, 5729
By the grace of *HaShem*, blessed is He,

1.

The verse states,¹²⁹⁹ “This is the decree of the Torah... they shall take to you a completely red cow etc.” This is the Torah reading of Parshat Parah about the *mitzvah* of burning the [Red] Heifer (*Parah Adumah*). In his discourse of the year 5629,¹³⁰⁰ (said one-hundred year ago), the Rebbe Maharash brings the statement in Midrash¹³⁰¹ and Yalkut on the verse,¹³⁰² “May my heart be perfect in Your statutes,” that the word “statutes-*Chukeckha*” חוקיך is plural here,¹³⁰³ and refers to the decree of the Passover (*Pesach*) [offering] and the decree of the Red Heifer, being that they are similar to each other.

About one the verse states, ‘This is the decree (*Chukat-* חקת) of the Passover (*Pesach*) [offering],’¹³⁰⁴ and about the other the verse states, ‘This is the decree (*Chukat-* חקת) of the

¹²⁹⁹ Numbers 19:2

¹³⁰⁰ Sefer HaMaamarim 5629 p. 93

¹³⁰¹ Midrash Shemot Rabba 19:2

¹³⁰² Psalms 119:80

¹³⁰³ See Maharzu to Shemot Rabba *ibid.*

¹³⁰⁴ Exodus 12:43

Torah.’ However, you do not know which is greater than the other. This is like the analogy of two distinguished ladies who were walking together and resembled each other. How can it be known which one the more distinguished? By [observing] which one accompanies and follows the other to her house.

So too, about the Passover (*Pesach*) sacrifice it is written, ‘This is the decree-*Chukat*-תקח,’ and about the Red Heifer (*Parah*) it is written, ‘This is the decree-*Chukat*-תקח.’ Which is greater? The Red Heifer (*Parah*) [is greater], being that those who eat the Passover (*Pesach*) sacrifice require [the Red Heifer], as the verse states,¹³⁰⁵ ‘For the contaminated person they shall take some of the ashes of the burning of the purification [animal] etc.’”

Now, we must better understand this. For, from the fact that it states, “You do not know which is greater than the other,” it is understood that each one has an element of superiority over the other. We therefore must understand the superiority of each of these two statutes, which is why one can think it is greater. On the other hand, being that each one has an element of superiority over the other, why then is the conclusion that the statute of the Red Heifer is greater than the statute of the Passover (*Pesach*) offering?

We also must understand what is added by the explanation that the decree of the Red Heifer is greater than the decree of the Passover (*Pesach*) offering with the analogy of the two distinguished ladies. For, even without the analogy, it is understood that the decree of the Red Heifer is greater than the decree of the Passover (*Pesach*) offering, for the very reason

¹³⁰⁵ Numbers 19:17

that those who eat the Passover (*Pesach*) sacrifice require the Red Heifer (*Parah Adumah*). (In other words, the Passover (*Pesach*) offering comes about through the preparation of the decree of the Red Heifer (*Parah Adumah*).) In contrast, the Red Heifer (*Parah Adumah*) does not require the Passover (*Pesach*) offering, since it can be performed anytime throughout the year.

2.

All this may be understood by prefacing with the difference between the Passover (*Pesach*) offering and the Red Heifer (*Parah Adumah*). To explain, the Passover (*Pesach*) offering is connected to the exodus from Egypt, and “Egypt-*Mitzrayim* מִצְרַיִם” is the matter of “constraints-*Meitzarim* מִיצְרִים” and limitations.¹³⁰⁶

The explanation is that the matter of constraints and limitations as they are spiritually, is the matter of the constriction (*Tzimtzum*) that took place in the creation of the worlds. This is as in the teaching of our sages, of blessed memory,¹³⁰⁷ “The world was created with ten utterances.”

This is like an very great sage who teaches a student who utterly is of no comparison to himself, in that he must constrict his intellect until in his speech, he draws down intellect that relates to the student. From this it is understood that this certainly is all the more so Above, that for the worlds to be brought into existence, since they are utterly of no

¹³⁰⁶ See Torah Ohr, Beshalach 64a; Likkutei Torah, Emor 35b and on, and elsewhere.

¹³⁰⁷ Mishnah Avot 5:1

comparison to Him, it therefore was necessary for there to be a matter of constriction (*Tzimtzum*).

In the language of Kabbalah,¹³⁰⁸ “At first the limitless light of the Unlimited One filled the space of the void and there was no room for the existence of the worlds. Then, when it arose in His desire to bring the worlds into being, He removed His great light to the side and a void and empty space was brought about for the existence of the worlds,” this being the matter of the constriction (*Tzimtzum*) through which the entire chaining down of the worlds (*Seder Hishtalshelut*) was then drawn forth. This is the matter of “Egypt-*Mitzrayim*-מצרים” of the side of holiness, from which it chained down that there also can be an Egypt in the literal sense, to the point of an Egypt of the side opposite holiness.

Now, the toil in serving *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, by leaving Egypt (*Mitzrayim*-מצרים) is the departure from all constraints (*Meitzarim*-מִיצְרִים) and limitations, including even the constraints and limitations of the side of holiness, until we attain the revelations that precede the constriction of the *Tzimtzum*.

Now, the exodus from the constraints and limitations is through serving *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, in Torah and *mitzvot*. This is because the root of Torah and *mitzvot* precedes the constriction of the *Tzimtzum*. That is, we make the blessing on the *mitzvot*, “Who sanctified us with His commandments,” specifying, “**His** commandments-*mitzvotav*-מִצְוֹתָיו.” This is as explained in Likkutei Torah (in the discourse about the *mitzvah*

¹³⁰⁸ Etz Chayim, Shaar 1 (Drush Iggulim v'Yosher) Anaf 2

of Tzitzit¹³⁰⁹ and elsewhere),¹³¹⁰ in explanation of the verse,¹³¹¹ “And you do all My commandments,” that “My commandments-*Mitzvotai*-מצוותי” are higher than “the commandments of *HaShem*-יהוה,” since they literally are “My commandments-*Mitzvotai*-מצוותי,” referring to the Essential Self of the Singular Preexistent Intrinsic and Unlimited One, meaning, before the constriction (*Tzimtzum*). Now, since the matter of a “commandment-*mitzvah*-מצוה” is of the root “connection-*Tzavta*-צוותא” and bonding,¹³¹² it thus is through the *mitzvot* that we bond with the Holy One, blessed is He.

Now, just as this is so with the fulfillment of the *mitzvot*, this likewise is so with the study of Torah, that through the study of Torah we bond and unify with the Essential Self of the Singular Preexistent Intrinsic and Unlimited One. This is as explained in Tanya¹³¹³ and in the discourses¹³¹⁴ that explain the superiority of the Torah over the *mitzvot*, that the Torah is the matter of “His life force,” whereas the *mitzvot* are only the “limbs.”

Although it is explained about the matter of the *mitzvot* that they are like the inversion of a signet,¹³¹⁵ meaning that the root of the *mitzvot* is higher than the root of the Torah, since the Torah is the matter of the brains (*Mochin*) whereas the *mitzvot* are rooted in the aspect of the skull (*Galgalta*) which transcends

¹³⁰⁹ Likkutei Torah, Shlach 46a and on; Ohr HaTorah, Shlach p. 587

¹³¹⁰ Likkutei Torah, Bamidbar 9c

¹³¹¹ Numbers 15:40

¹³¹² Likkutei Torah, Bechukotai 45c; Sefer HaMaamarim 5698 p. 52.

¹³¹³ Tanya, Likkutei Amarim, Ch. 23

¹³¹⁴ Kitzurim v’Ha’arot L’Tanya p. 104 and on; Sefer HaMaamarim 5633 Vol. 2, p. 343 and on; 5653 p. 224 and on; Discourse entitled “*Ki Ner Mitzvah*” 5692 (Sefer HaMaamarim 5692 p. 120 and on).

¹³¹⁵ See Tanya, Iggeret HaKodesh, Epistle 20 (131a).

the brains (*Mochin*), and therefore, when they are drawn down and come into revelation, the *mitzvot* are then lower, nonetheless, in their first root, the Torah is rooted even higher than the *mitzvot*, since “the Torah and the Holy One, blessed is He, are entirely one.”¹³¹⁶ In other words, it is rooted in the Essential Self of the Singular Preexistent Intrinsic and Unlimited One. In contrast, the *mitzvot* are only rooted in the aspect of the desire (*Ratzon*).¹³¹⁷

We thus find that through the general service of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, of Torah and *mitzvot*, we unify and bond with the Essential Self of the Singular Preexistent Intrinsic and Unlimited One. For, through the study of Torah “a most wondrous union, of which there is no similar union etc.,” is caused. Likewise, through the fulfillment of the *mitzvot*, “the hand that gives to charity becomes a chariot for Godliness.”¹³¹⁸

This then, is the mode of serving Him of the righteous *Tzaddikim* in fulfilling Torah and *mitzvot*, by which they depart from all constraints and limitations. Even though this is an orderly labor, nevertheless, through this labor of fulfilling Torah and *mitzvot* they affect the exodus from Egypt (*Mitzrayim*-מצרים).

This also is the two meanings of the word “*Pesach*-פסח,” one being of the root “skipping over,”¹³¹⁹ and the other being of

¹³¹⁶ Tanya, Ch. 4 & beginning of Ch. 23 citing Zohar; See Zohar I 24a; Zohar II 60a; Tikkunei Zohar, beginning of Tikkun 6; Likkutei Torah, Nitzavim 46a, and elsewhere. [Also see Adir BaMarom of the Ramchal citing Zohar.]

¹³¹⁷ See Tanya, Iggeret HaKodesh, Epistle 20 (131a).

¹³¹⁸ Tanya, Likkutei Amarim, Ch. 23

¹³¹⁹ Rashi to Exodus 12:11; 12:13

the root “The Merciful One takes heed-*Chas*-חס.”¹³²⁰ The word “*Pesach*-פסח” as it means “skipping over” refers to skipping over the constraints and limitations, and the word “*Pesach*-פסח” as it means “the Merciful One takes heed-*Chas*-חס,” refers to the matter of Mercy-*Rachamim*, which is the middle line (*Kav HaEmtza’ee*) that ascends to the Crown-*Keter*,¹³²¹ higher than the other two lines. That is, in the Crown-*Keter* itself it reaches a much higher level than the other two lines. All this is through the service of “the decree (*Chukat*-חוקת) of the Pesach [offering],” which generally refers to the mode of service of the righteous (*Tzaddikim*).

However, the decree (*Chukat*-חוקת) of the Red Heifer (*Parah Adumah*) is the matter of the service of those who return to *HaShem*-יהו"ה in repentance (*Baalei Teshuvah*). This is because the service of the Red Heifer (*Parah Adumah*) is through burning, in that they burn its entire existence, through which the three foundational elements of fire, water, and air, are nullified and become consumed in smoke, so that all that remains is ash, which is the foundational element of earth (as stated in *Iggeret HaKodesh*¹³²² and as also brought in the discourse).¹³²³

The matter of this, as it relates to service of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, is that the animal soul has the power of lust (*Ko’ach HaMita’veh*) and can also lust for undesirable things. That is, not only is the lust for forbidden matters undesirable, but even lusts for permissible matters, such as the lust for eating

¹³²⁰ Shnei Luchot HaBrit, Mesechet Pesachim 157a in the note.

¹³²¹ Likkutei Torah, Masei 96b

¹³²² Tanya, *Iggeret HaKodesh*, Epistle 15 (122b)

¹³²³ Sefer HaMaamarim ibid. p. 101

that is not for the sake of Heaven. Even though the food itself is permissible food, and is not tied and bound in the hands of the forces of externality, nevertheless, when he eats it to satisfy his lust, he temporarily descends into the utter evil of the three completely impure husks (*Shalosh Kelipot HaTmei'ot*).¹³²⁴ This being so, it is an undesirable matter, to such an extent that he also can [end up] lusting for forbidden things.

Now, the evil form by which the power of lust (*Ko'ach HaMitaveh*) is depicted must be utterly burned, to such an extent that nothing remains of it except for the power of lust as it is in its simple state.

This is because the essence of the power of lust (*Ko'ach HaMitaveh*) is not evil. This is why it is not completely nullified, but is transformed into holiness, this being the matter of repentance (*Teshuvah*). This is as stated in Iggeret HaTeshuvah,¹³²⁵ that repentance is in a way that if he was accustomed to read one page, he should read two pages etc.,¹³²⁶ through which he causes the bond to be doubled and redoubled.

That is, he does not completely nullify its power but only transforms it into an existence of holiness, and on the contrary, this gives him even greater force and strength in matters of holiness (as will be explained).

This then, is the matter of burning the Heifer, through which the ascent of the animalistic soul is caused etc. There then must be the matter of drawing down (*Hamshachah*), which

¹³²⁴ Tanya, Likkutei Amarim, Ch. 7

¹³²⁵ Tanya, Iggeret HaTeshuvah, Ch. 9

¹³²⁶ See Midrash Vayikra Rabba, beginning of Ch. 25.

is the meaning of the verse,¹³²⁷ “He shall put upon it, spring water in a vessel.”

3.

Now, based on the explanation above about the difference between the decree (*Chukat*-תקן) of the Pesach [offering] and the decree (*Chukat*-תקן) of the Red Heifer (*Parah Adumah*), that the decree of the Pesach [offering] is the mode of service of the Righteous (*Tzaddikim*), whereas the decree of the Red Heifer (*Parah Adumah*) is the mode of service of those who return in repentance (*Baalei Teshuvah*), it is understood why the Midrash states, “You do not know which one is greater than the other.”

This is like the Midrash that states¹³²⁸ about the deeds of the righteous (*Tzaddikim*) and the deeds of the wicked (*Resha'im*), “I do not know which of them He desires, whether the deeds of these or the deeds of those.” At first glance, this is not understood. For, how is it possible for Him to desire the deeds of the wicked?

However, the explanation is that the intention of the Midrash that indicates that He might desire the deeds of the wicked, refers to their deeds **after** they repent. About this it states, “I do not know which of them He desires, whether the deeds of the righteous (*Tzaddikim*) or the deeds of the wicked (*Resha'im*),” meaning [the deeds of] those who returned in repentance (*Baalei Teshuvah*).

¹³²⁷ Numbers 19:17

¹³²⁸ Midrash Bereishit Rabba 2:5

This is also the explanation of the dispute in the Talmud¹³²⁹ as to whether the Righteous (*Tzaddikim*) are greater than those who return in repentance (*Baalei Teshuvah*) or whether those who return in repentance (*Baalei Teshuvah*) are greater than the Righteous (*Tzaddikim*).

This is because those who return in repentance (*Baalei Teshuvah*) have a superiority over the Righteous (*Tzaddikim*) in that “they are drawn to Him with greater strength,”¹³³⁰ with greater force and power, this being through the service of burning the Red Heifer (*Parah Adumah*) in that they receive from the left side, meaning the face of the ox on the Supernal Chariot (*Merkavah*),¹³³¹ this being the matter of [the verse],¹³³² “Many crops come through the power of the ox,” this being the elevation brought about through refining the animalistic soul, especially through the service of transforming (*It’hapcha*) the matters of the three completely impure husks (*Shalosh Kelipot HaTmei’ot*) through which there is the refinement and elevation of the sparks of the world of Chaos-*Tohu*.

With the above in mind, we can understand the statement in Talmud,¹³³³ “Those beds that she had arranged for

¹³²⁹ Talmud Bavli, Brachot 34b

¹³³⁰ Zohar I 129b; See Tanya, Iggeret HaTeshuvah, end of Ch. 8; Torah Ohr, Mikeitz 39c

¹³³¹ Zohar III 180b

¹³³² Proverbs 14:4; See Likkutei Torah, Ha’azinu 75d

¹³³³ Talmud Bavli, Menachot 44a – “There was a certain man who was diligent with the Mitzvah of Tzitzit. He heard that there was a certain harlot in one of the cities overseas whose services cost the exorbitant sum of four-hundred gold coins (because of her extraordinary beauty). He sent her four-hundred gold coins and set a time to meet her. When his appointment came, he came and sat at the entrance of her house. Her maidservant entered and told her that the man had arrived, and she asked him to enter, so he did. She had arranged seven beds of silver and one of gold, in ascending order, with a silver ladder between each one, with the top being of

him in a prohibited fashion, she now arranged for him in a permitted fashion.” At first glance, what elevation is there in this fact that “the beds that she had arranged for him in a prohibited fashion, she now arranged for him in a permitted fashion?” However, the explanation is that through the work of those who return in repentance (*Baalei Teshuvah*), the prohibited itself is transformed to be permissible.

There likewise is a superiority to the service of Him of the Righteous (*Tzaddikim*), this being an orderly and constant mode of service, as the verse states,¹³³⁴ “It is the continual (*Tamid*) burnt-offering that was done at Mount Sinai,” “the constant daily offerings (*Temidin*) according to their order.”¹³³⁵

gold. She went up and sat naked upon the top bed, and he too went up to sit naked next to her. In the process, his Tzitzit slapped him in the face, and he descended and sat down on the ground. She too descended and sat down on the ground. She said to him, “I take an oath by Gappa of Rome that I will not let you to leave until you tell me what defect you saw in me.” He responded, “I take an oath by the Temple service that I never saw a woman as beautiful as you. However, there is a *mitzvah* that *HaShem*-יהוה our God, commanded us, and it is called Tzitzit. In the [passages in the Torah where it is commanded] it is written (Numbers 15:41) twice, “I am *HaShem*-יהוה your God,” [indicating that] “I am the One who will punish [those who transgress the *mitzvot*] and I am The One who will reward [those who fulfill the *mitzvot*].” When I saw my Tzitzit, they appeared to me as four witnesses who will testify against me.” She replied, “I will not allow you to leave until you tell me your name, the name of your city, the name of your teacher, and the name of your Yeshivah in which you studied Torah. He wrote the information down and gave it to her. She then got up and divided all her property, giving one-third to the kingdom, one-third to the poor, and one-third she took for herself and also kept those beds. She then went to the study hall of Rabbi Chiyya and said to him: My teacher, instruct [your students to teach me] and convert me. Rabbi Chiyya said to her, perhaps you set your sights on one of my students? She took out the note and gave it to Rabbi Chiyya. He said to her: Go take possession of your acquisition. Those beds that she had previously arranged for him in a prohibited way, she now arranged for him in a permitted way.” The Talmud concludes: “This was the reward given to him in this world, but about the coming world (*Olam HaBa*), I do not know how much reward.”

¹³³⁴ Numbers 28:6

¹³³⁵ See the liturgy of the Musaf prayer of the holidays.

Thus, since there is a superiority in the decree (*Chukat*-חֻקָּה) of the Passover (*Pesach*) offering, this being the matter of the service of Him by the Righteous (*Tzaddikim*), as well as in the decree (*Chukat*-חֻקָּה) of the Red Heifer (*Parah Adumah*), this being the matter of the service of Him by those who return in repentance (*Baalei Teshuvah*), it therefore states, “You do not know which is greater than the other.”

About this, the analogy is brought of the “two distinguished ladies who were walking together and resembled each other etc.” The matter of “walking” is on the outside (specifically before they enter their homes). This is because the true matter of “walking” (*Hiluch*-הִלּוּךְ) according to Torah, is that it refers to serving *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, in a limitless way.¹³³⁶

This mode of service is specifically on the outside, as explained in Torah Ohr¹³³⁷ on the verse,¹³³⁸ “I will find You outside,” which refers to the general mode of serving *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, by businessmen, and more specifically, refers to the service of Him of those who return in repentance (*Baalei Teshuvah*).¹³³⁹ That is, it specifically is in them that there is the true matter of “walking,” which is a limitless mode of service.

This also is why the decree (*Chukat*-חֻקָּה) of the Red Heifer (*Parah Adumah*) even purifies the father of all fathers of impurity. This is as stated in Midrash¹³⁴⁰ about impurity

¹³³⁶ See Likkutei Torah, Shlach 38d; Sefer HaMaamarim 5660 p. 107 and on.

¹³³⁷ Torah Ohr, Terumah 80b

¹³³⁸ Song of Songs 8:1

¹³³⁹ Also see Ohr HaTorah, Chukat p. 798.

¹³⁴⁰ Midrash Bamidbar Rabba 19:4

contracted from a corpse that, “Moshe’s face paled and he asked, ‘With what will he be purified?’” In other words, even with Moshe, whose matter was the Supernal Wisdom-*Chochmah*, his face paled, and he asked, “With what will he be purified?” until the Holy One, blessed is He, taught him the Torah portion of the Red Heifer (*Parah Adumah*). From this it is understood that the decree (*Chukat*-חֻקָּה) of the Red Heifer (*Parah Adumah*) utterly transcends all measure and limitation.

4.

This then, is the meaning of the verse,¹³⁴¹ “May my heart be perfect in Your decrees (*Chukecha*-חֻקֶיךָ).” That is, both modes of service are necessary, both the decree (*Chukat*-חֻקָּה) of the Passover (*Pesach*) offering, as well as the decree (*Chukat*-חֻקָּה) of the Red Heifer (*Parah Adumah*).

That is, even for the Righteous (*Tzaddikim*), whose service is entirely in a way of orderly work, must be in a way of “skipping over.” For, although the mode by which the Righteous (*Tzaddikim*) serve *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, is the work of “[you shall love *HaShem*-יהו"ה your God] with all your soul,”¹³⁴² whereas the mode by which those who return in repentance (*Baalei Teshuvah*) serve Him is the work of “with all your more,”¹³⁴³ nonetheless, the Righteous (*Tzaddikim*) must also have the manner of “with all your more,” (which is the matter of “skipping over”).

¹³⁴¹ Psalms 119:80

¹³⁴² Deuteronomy 6:5

¹³⁴³ Deuteronomy 6:5 *ibid*.

Likewise, those who return in repentance (*Baalei Teshuvah*) must have the mode of serving Him [indicated by the verse], “He shall put upon it, spring water in a vessel.” That is, he must draw the service of Him in repentance (*Teshuvah*) into the orderly service of fulfilling Torah and *mitzvot*,¹³⁴⁴ at which point the deeds are “good deeds,”¹³⁴⁵ since they come after serving Him with repentance (*Teshuvah*).

The Midrash concludes, “Which is greater? The Red Heifer (*Parah*) [is greater], being that those who eat the Passover (*Pesach*) sacrifice require [the Red Heifer].” In other words, even the Righteous (*Tzaddikim*) require service of Him in repentance (*Teshuvah*), being that “Moshiach is destined to bring the Righteous (*Tzaddikim*) to repentance (*Teshuvah*),” meaning that he will cause the Righteous (*Tzaddikim*) to also serve *HaShem*-יהוה, blessed is He, in repentance (*Teshuvah*).

In general, this also is the difference between the time when the Holy Temple was standing and the time of the exile. For, in the time of the Holy Temple there was the revealed illumination of “the sun of *HaShem*-יהוה,”¹³⁴⁶ and there likewise was the revealed illumination of “the soul of man is the flame of *HaShem*-יהוה,”¹³⁴⁷ and “a *mitzvah* is a flame and the Torah is light,”¹³⁴⁸ this being the state and standing of daytime, which is the matter of the service of Him by the Righteous (*Tzaddikim*).

¹³⁴⁴ See Iggeret HaTeshuvah, beginning of Ch. 8; Likkutei Sichot Vol. 39 p. 88

¹³⁴⁵ See Likkutei Torah, Matot 82a; Shemini Atzeret 85a; Shir HaShirim 17c

¹³⁴⁶ See Psalms 84:12; Shaar HaYichud VeHaEmunah, translated as The Gate of Unity and Faith, Ch. 4.

¹³⁴⁷ Proverbs 20:27

¹³⁴⁸ Proverbs 6:23

In contrast, during the time of exile, when “because of our sins we were exiled from our land,”¹³⁴⁹ this being the time of darkness, and it is necessary to transform the darkness into light, this being the mode of service of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, of those who return in repentance (*Baalei Teshuvah*).

Now, it is through serving Him with repentance (*Teshuvah*) at this time, that we bring about the matter of “bringing the Righteous (*Tzaddikim*) to repentance (*Teshuvah*),” so that even the Righteous (*Tzaddikim*) have service of Him with repentance (*Teshuvah*), with the coming redemption brought about through Moshiach, speedily in our days.

¹³⁴⁹ See the Musaf liturgy of the holidays.