

Pulse OF Emunah

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life

LESSONS

LIFE ON THE LINE


A *frum* man owned a nursing home in Baltimore where all the residents were non-Jews. One day, however, he discovered that one of the elderly women living there was indeed Jewish. He arranged for her to receive kosher meals. But the woman refused to accept them; she insisted on eating the same nonkosher food that was provided to the other residents.

The case went to court. The judge ruled that if the woman did not begin receiving the meals she wanted within 30 days, the facility would be shut down. The owner called Rav Noach Weinberg and begged for a heter, but Rav Weinberg ruled that it was forbidden to serve this woman *treif*.

Several months later, Rav Weinberg met the man and asked what had happened. The man replied, “We figured it out. She agreed to eat kosher.”

“How did you do that?” Rav Weinberg exclaimed.

“My life was on the line,” the owner said simply. “I was in danger of losing the facility and my entire livelihood. I had no choice: I had to figure out how to get her to become religious.”

All of us must realize that our lives are on the line as well. Our entire existence revolves around our obligation to create a *kiddush Hashem*. If we understand that, then we will make any sacrifices that are necessary — giving up time, money, or anything else that is required — to carry out our mission and achieve the purpose of our existence. 

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gem

OF THE WEEK

THE BOUNDARIES OF CHOK

By Rabbi Moshe Pogrow

We usually use the word “*chukim*” to refer to limitations and rules laid down for no apparent reason. However, the term means the very opposite.

A *chok* is something that is required by the conditions and purpose of any thing or relationship. Accordingly, it flows from the nature of the thing, from the conditions of its existence. Thus, *hatrifeini lechem chuki* (Mishlei 30:8) means the food that is necessary for my existence and given to me from Your hand. So too in Parshas Vayigash, where *chok* denotes the means required for the kohanim’s subsistence.

Similarly, the *chukim* of the Torah are our moral substance, principles that flow from the very nature of our being and destiny. Keeping the *chukim* is essential for our existence and for the fulfillment of our moral nature, just as bread is essential for the existence and fulfillment of our bodies.

The word *halicha*, as in *im bechukosai teileichu*, denotes putting in effort to attain such things. Our moral integrity depends on the purity of this effort.


Chukos Hashem are the bounds set by G-d in accordance with our moral

continued on reverse side

powerful
PRAYER 

AHAVA RABBA:
A LIGHT OF LOVE

In this *bracha*, we ask Hashem for the opportunity to learn His Torah. Mishlei tells us “A mitzvah is a candle (or oil lamp), but Torah is light.” All the *mitzvos* are compared to a lamp that holds oil, while Torah learning is the fire that ignites it.

Across the Jewish world, people are learning Torah, whether full time or while supporting their families, for no other reason than love of it. Nations, too, have their codes of law, *lehavdil*—but does anyone study American law on their time off? It is this love that keeps us as a nation and enabled us to survive. 

Adapted from Emunah in the Classroom



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NO CONTEST II

By Rabbi Dovid Sapirman, Dean, Ani Maamin Foundation

We live in a world saturated with falsehood and corruption; there are not many who deserve our trust. But *sheker* is not something new. Last week, this column discussed the illogic inherent in the foundational claims of Christianity and Islam—that Hashem gave one Torah and made a promise to one nation in front of millions, then privately changed His mind but only told one person.

We continue to examine the silliness of these religions, and how they collapse under scrutiny. For instance, the Quran claims that it was not Yitzchak but Yishmael whom Avraham was ready to sacrifice in the Akeida. The “problem” is that by the time Muhammad made this claim, the Torah had already been in existence for 2,000 years, with multiple scrolls disseminated around the world stating that the son of the Akeida was Yitzchak. It had even been translated into Greek by the order of King Ptolemy, 900 years before the dawn of Islam, reiterating Yitzchak’s status.

Other absurd or inaccurate claims in the Quran include Haman being an advisor of Pharaoh; the mother of the Christian deity being the same person as Moshe’s sister Miriam; Pharaoh’s wife pulling Moshe from the Nile; and 75 people going down to Mitzrayim. If the Quran was given by the angel Gavriel as Muhammad claimed, why is it so full of errors? It is obvious that the book’s very human writers simply overheard Jews telling assorted stories of Tanach.

Among the Jewish people, only a person of great wisdom and good character traits, one who is in control of their desires, can qualify as a prophet. To us, Olam Haba means basking in the radiance of the Shechinah. Muhammad, *lehavdil*, was an illiterate warlord by his own admission, and the paradise he promises his faithful is a harem of many beautiful women—with many eager terrorists motivated to die in the name of Islam as a result. (No word on what faithful women receive when they die.)

The *navi* Yirmiyahu tells us that when Mashiach comes, the nations will admit that their ancient faiths were totally false: “Nations will come to you from the ends of the earth, and say, ‘Our fathers gave us nothing but lies as an inheritance, emptiness with no benefit.’” Soon the day will come when all will recognize the falsity of the belief systems they inherited from their ancestors, and see the truth of Torah. 🕯

nature and our mission. Within these bounds, our efforts are pure and even a duty; but beyond them, it is corruption and a crime.

Im bechukosai teileichu, then, means: If, in satisfying your physical aspirations, you move strictly within the limits drawn in My Torah...

All the other commandments are included here in the term “*mitzvos*.” The *chukim* are there to keep man’s moral purity, while the *mitzvos* assign him his tasks. He must fulfill his duties while keeping the charge entrusted to him by Hashem.

If *neilech b’chukos Hashem* and if *nishmor v’naaseh es mitzvosav*, then we will have done everything needed on our part to establish our physical, social, and political welfare. Everything else will come from G-d.

If we follow His statutes, we will be morally pure. If we study His commandments and take them to heart, we will be enlightened intellectually and conscientious in our actions. And if we carry out His commandments, we will be executors of justice and lovingkindness.

In this merit, G-d will release our land from the physical and political forces that affect the rest of the world. He will bring heaven and earth into harmony, so that nothing opposes our efforts. All the elements will work together to further our success, for this success is the realization of G-d’s Will on man’s earth.

What was taken away from mankind because of its disobedience of G-d, and what is destined to be given back if it obeys Him again, will become a reality for us in our own land, and it will be the beginning of ultimately restoring it to all of mankind. 🕯

Based on the commentary of Rav Shamshon Raphael Hirsch zt”l on Chumash, with permission from the publisher.



wonder WORLD

A LAND AT REST



Can dirt get tired?

In Parshas Behar-Bechukosai, the Torah commands us to let the land rest every seven years during shemittah, and “Hashem will command a blessing” for it. But how? When farmers plant crops year after year, the soil gets tired. Each plant pulls nutrients like nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium from the ground. If the soil isn’t given a break, nutrients run out, and the crops don’t grow as well. Letting the land lie fallow, or unplanted, gives the earth time to recharge. Rain and wind help return nutrients to the soil. Natural plants grow and die, adding organic matter that feeds the earth. Even tiny organisms in the dirt have time to rebuild healthy soil structure. Hashem commands us to let the land rest and recharge, just as people do on Shabbos. 🕯