

Rabbi Oelbaum, my מָרָא דְאַתְרָא, once asked an interesting question. If someone knew he was going to be stranded on a desert island and he had a chance to take along two and only two ספרים, what two ספרים would he take? What would you suggest? So all of us said סידור and 99% of us said חומש. He said, nope. He said the סידור and a קיצור שולחן ערוך. And it's interesting that he said that, and if you think about it, it makes a world of sense. The author of the קיצור שולחן ערוך is Rav Shlomo Ganzfried, and he was a גאון עולם. If you look at the קיצור שולחן ערוך, it's similar to רש"י in that anybody can read it and can understand it, and it's written so perfectly and so beautifully that you really think that a very simple person wrote it. But it's not. It's written by a גאון עולם. Rav Shlomo Ganzfried wrote other ספרים. And once upon a time, I had the opportunity at a ספרים store to see one of his other ספרים called the אפיריון, which means a palace.

It's a very slim little ספר. And Rav Oelbaum said about this ספר that as easy as the קיצור שולחן ערוך is to read, the אפיריון is extraordinarily difficult to read. It shows his גאונות. He gives you snippets from here and there, and you have to figure out what he's saying and where he got it from. Here comes חוקת אפיריון.

The pasuk says זאת חקת התורה. Why does it say that? It should have said זאת חקת הפרה. What does the חוקת בעל המהבר ספר - Rav Heller, the פרה אדומה have to do with חוקת התורה? And he brings down from a goan Rav Heller, the אֶמְרַתִּי אֶחָכְמָה וְהָיָא רְחוּקָה מִמְּנִי (7:23) Mishlei. The חידושי טיב גיטין, who discusses the medrash on the pasuk in Mishlei (7:23) אֶמְרַתִּי אֶחָכְמָה וְהָיָא רְחוּקָה מִמְּנִי. The מדרש says פרה אדומה. זו פרה אדומה. That is, the פרה אדומה is the thing that Shlomo HaMelech said he tried to understand, and it remained far from him. But we have to understand something. There are many חוקים in the Torah, not just the פרה אדומה. Why was this one singled out? Why does the מדרש specifically pick פרה אדומה, when there are plenty of mitzvos that also have no known explanation? After all, a חוק is by definition a גזירת המלך, something we do simply because Hashem commanded it.

The answer, he explains, lies in the wording of the pasuk: אֶמְרַתִּי אֶחָכְמָה - I said, "I will become wise." That implies an attempt, an effort to understand. And still, וְהָיָא רְחוּקָה מִמְּנִי - it remained far. This unique frustration applies only to פרה אדומה. Why? Because the פרה אדומה is a paradox. It's מטמא and מטהר טמאים. That's the issue. If you try to figure out how it מטמא the טמאים, you're left wondering how it can at the same time מטמא the טהורים. And if you go the other way and try to understand how it מטמא the טהורים, then how can it possibly be מטמא the טמאים? You're stuck. Whichever side you examine, the other side falls apart. That's why פרה אדומה is the ultimate example of a חוק, it's completely beyond human logic. No matter how hard you try, you can't come up with a reasonable explanation. That's not the case with other חוקים. As difficult as they might be, we can still come up with a סברא, a line of thinking, as to what their purpose might be, even if we know that explanation isn't the real reason and that it's still just a חוק.

Now, many אפיקורסים, which he brings down and I know about this from experience, want to find a טעם for a מצוה. The best example was what one of my rabbeim told me, I think it was Rav Moshe Tendler זצ"ל, he said the אפיקורסים or the Reform Jews said Moses was a great hygienist, and he said you shouldn't eat pig because the pigs of those days all had trichinosis, a particular kind of worm that pigs are known to carry. So therefore today, when we raise the pigs hygienically, now we can eat pig. So the אפיריון brings this down exactly, he says, they try to find a טעם for a מצוה, they knock off the טעם, they knock off the מצוה. But he says, the הבל יפצה פיהם, they should, Hashem should shut their mouths. We are ממהויב to keep all of the mitzvos of the torah, whether or not we understand them, whether or not there's a reason for it, even those we think we understand the reason, we have to believe that each and every מצוה is a חוק.

We have to learn this out from פרה אדומה. It's intellectually impossible to figure out the reason for the פרה אדומה. So therefore that is a teaching for all the other מצוות, just like all the other מצוות, even if there's a שכל to it, we still have to follow it regardless of whatever comes along, because that's גזירה הקדוש ברוך הוא. So whether or not you have the reason, you have to keep all the מצוות just as it's a חוק.



That's why it says זאת חוקת התורה. Why? פרשת פרה אדומה teaches us that all of the Torah, we have to keep it only because Hashem told us to keep it.

Now, in פרשת בלק, one of בלעם's - not most famous ברכות, but a pretty famous ברכה is, הֵן עַם לְבָדֵד יֵשְׁכָן, (מה טובו אֶהְיֶה יָעֲקֹב, That's pretty good too.)

הֵן עַם לְבָדֵד יֵשְׁכָן וּבְגוֹיִם לֹא יִתְחַשְּׁב. The ספר quoted in the אפיריון, brings down a דרשה that connects to this pasuk. He explains that הָמָן used a certain טענה when he approached אחשוורוש to try to kill all the Jews. He said הָעַמִּים בֵּין הָעַמִּים מִפְּזָר וּמִפְּרָד - They're separated, they're scattered, they're not worth anything. What was he trying to say? His claim was that כלל ישראל had no אחדות, no שלום. Even though they were spread out and separated, they still weren't unified. Now, that's an interesting observation. Because usually, when people are living together in one place, close to each other, there's always room for מחלוקת. People pick fights, complain, say "this isn't good," or "he's not right," and so on. But when people are spread out, a little group here, a little group there, there's often more אחדות. They stick together because they know they're a minority, they know they're isolated, and they realize that they need each other to survive. הָמָן's טענה to אחשוורוש was they are all separated and they're still fighting, they're not together. They're not sticking together. What did בלעם realize that that was not true? בלעם realized the truth because בלעם was a נביא. כלל ישראל are always unified. Even when they're living together, they don't pick fights. הֵן עַם לְבָדֵד יֵשְׁכָן, even though they're sitting all by themselves in their country, וּבְגוֹיִם לֹא יִתְחַשְּׁב, they still have אחדות. How do you know that? From the word הֵן. What does the word הֵן teach us? It teaches you אחדות.

How does the letters of ה-ב teach you אחדות? So he brings down a fascinating little insight. All letters have a partner. All letters have a זיווג. א' goes with ט', makes 10. ב' goes with ה', makes 10. ג' goes with ז', makes 10. ד' goes with ו' makes 10. But ה' is stuck in the middle without a partner. Similarly with the numbers that are in the decades. י' goes with צ', כ' goes with פ', they all go together except for נ' and ה'. נ' and ה' are the אותיות that have no זיווג.

הֵן עַם לְבָדֵד יֵשְׁכָן - Even though they're all by themselves and have no partner, they still stick together. There is a שלום and an אחדות between them. That was one of the greatest מעלות that בלעם found about כלל ישראל and gave them a ברכה. We should continue that אחדות and that unity and שלום in ישראל, and especially today when things are so tough. But all the time, all the time, there's always been מחלוקת and we have to look away. I tell everybody, look away, be kind, always look to be מלמד זכות on somebody else. אמן. מלמד זכות we should have על ישראל and משיח should come. בעזרת השם.

