

## This is the statute of the Torah. (19:2)

The *parsha* begins with the words, *chukas haTorah*, statute of the Torah, when, in fact, it is addressing the laws of *Parah Adumah*, Red Cow, which is a *chok*, statute whose rationale defies human logic. In other words, the *parsha* should have begun with the words, "This is the statute of the Red Cow." *Horav Yaakov Galinsky, zl*, takes a practical approach towards explaining this, saying that a corollary exists between Torah and *Parah*, in that the anomaly which distinguishes *Parah Adumah* as a *chok* likewise applies to the Torah. The primary *chok* of *Parah Adumah* (exclusive of the entire purifying process, which is a spiritual dynamic) is the fact that, *mitaheres es ha'tameim u'mitamaas es ha'tehorim*. The spiritually contaminated person becomes *tahor*, pure, when the mixture of water and ashes is sprinkled upon him, while the one who prepares the mixture himself becomes *tamei*, impure. Thus, there are two perspectives, vantage points, for viewing the *Parah Adumah*: purifying agent; contaminant. Similarly, concerning Torah knowledge, there are variant ways to view the knowledge one has amassed.

A *yeshivah* student is studying in the *bais hamedrash*. Before him on a table are a number of tomes of *Talmud*, each opened to a specific page. Also on the table are opened volumes of commentary on the *Talmud*, from the *Rishonim*, Early Commentators, to contemporary scholars. Their notes and insights are all before the student as he works his way through a *sugya*, topic. With each commentary, his insight becomes clearer, his understanding of the topic more profound, as he delves deeper, plumbing the depths of the various insights into the *Talmud*.

At that point, a young man who has just recently joined the ranks of the observant, whose erudition is limited to a few verses of *Chumash*, comes over and stares at this scenario. Not really understanding what is taking place before his eyes, and why so many books are open on the table, he takes note of the Hebrew script of the books and exclaims, "Wow! You can read *Rashi*!"

Is this not mind-boggling? Do we have an idea of the inestimable value of Torah knowledge? How fortunate we are to be proficient in reading *Rashi* – and to be able to understand his commentary. Furthermore, we complete the entire Torah annually, while we all study *Talmud* with its many commentaries, *Shulchan Aruch*, and *Poskim*, etc. Do we ever take into consideration our overwhelming good fortune?

Another example of the Torah's purification process (which we do not even begin to appreciate) is related. *Rav Galinsky's* brother-in-law, *Rav Zalmen Astullin*, emigrated to *Eretz Yisrael* after living for years as a prisoner in the frigid tundra of Siberia. Suffering physically from lack of food and the subzero temperatures was not as deprecating as the dearth of spirituality. Every *mitzvah* he was able to observe was carried out with the greatest *mesiras nefesh*, self-sacrifice, although he had no *minyan* for *Shabbos*, *Yom Tov*, *Rosh Hashanah*, *Yom Kippur*. Finally, he was allowed to emigrate to the Holy Land, broken physically, but spiritually intact. The joy of seeing Jews, observant, performing *mitzvos* in public, was overwhelming.

*Rav Galinsky* relates a story about taking his brother-in-law to the famous *Lederman Shul* in Bnei Brak. *Rav Galinsky* explained that the early (*Vasikin*) *minyan* was downstairs, with another *minyan* starting upstairs about thirty minutes later. As soon as the first *minyan* concluded their services, another started immediately. The same routine took place upstairs, with this process continuing on through part of the morning. *Rav Astullin* said he would remain in *shul* and take his time *davening*. When a number of hours had passed and he had not yet come home, *Rav Galinsky* began to look for him. The first place he searched was the *Lederman shul*, where he found his brother-in-law running back and forth from one *minyan* to another. Asking him what he was doing, his brother-in-law replied, "Can you imagine how fortunate you are? Every minute you have an opportunity to recite *Amen*, *Yehei Shmei Rabba*! I just could not bring myself to leave. This is a gold mine!"

Do we realize our gold mine – or are we in too much of a rush to leave early? I have often said that the last *Kaddish* is called *Kaddish Yasom*, the Orphan's *Kaddish*, because no one is present to answer *Amen*!

The flip side of Torah erudition which contaminates the pure (so to speak), is obvious. We satisfy ourselves with learning measured amounts of Torah. In his *Shem Olam*, the *Chafetz Chaim* suggests that the *ben Torah* who thinks that he has achieved much in Torah should stand opposite a bookcase filled with *sefarim*, a *Shas*, a set of *Mishnayos*, and ask himself how many volumes he has completed and in how many of those does he have unsurpassed clarity? That should do the trick. On the one hand, we should never underestimate our knowledge of Torah. On the other hand, however, we should never overestimate our knowledge of Torah either!