

"This is the fundamental law of the Torah... and they take unto you a completely red heifer." (19:2)

The *Midrash* relates that when Moshe ascended to the Heavens, he heard the voice of Hashem teaching the angels the *parsha* of *Parah Adumah*. Why does this *mitzvah* assume such an exalted place before Hashem. The following may be suggested. *chukim* (Divine ordinances whose purposes or meaning are not necessarily understood by human intelligence) and *mishpatim* (civil laws that promulgate the safety and survival of society whose rationale may be grasped by human intelligence), are two distinct sets of *mitzvos*. Just as there are two forms of *mitzvos*, so too are there contrasting situations in life. There are moments in our existence when the Jew is respected, his religion is held in esteem, and his lifestyle is not subject to abuse and ridicule. During such times, studying *Torah* and fulfilling *mitzvos* may be compared to *mishpatim*, since we have every reason and opportunity to properly perform Hashem's *mitzvos*. The tribulations of every day existence are not in opposition to their observance. Not so, when our people are faced with terrible circumstances which warrant our vigilance against those who seek to destroy us. When we are suffering continued harassment and insult, and whichever way we turn, our ultimate faith in Hashem is questioned. At such moments in our existence, our *emunah* and faith in Hashem may be compared to a form of *chukim*. There is no logical reason for believing in Him, other than our strict and unfailing trust in Hashem. It is for this reason, and for these moments in our history, that Hashem loves the concept of *chukim*. The ultimate test of our faith and trust in Him is when this trust defies human reasoning and intelligence.