

How to Know When You're Giving Too Much

Numbers, Ch. 19

1. The L-rd spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying:
2. This is the statute of the Torah which the L-rd commanded, saying, Speak to the children of Israel and have them take for you a perfectly red unblemished cow, upon which no yoke was laid.
3. And you shall give it to Eleazar the kohen, and he shall take it outside the camp and slaughter it in his presence.
4. Eleazar the kohen shall take from its blood with his finger and sprinkle it toward the front of the Tent of Meeting seven times.
5. The cow shall then be burned in his presence; its hide, its flesh, its blood, with its dung he shall burn it. 6. The kohen shall take a piece of cedar wood, hyssop, and crimson wool, and cast them into the burning of the cow.
7. The kohen shall wash his garments and bathe his flesh in water, and then he may enter the camp, and the kohen shall be unclean until evening.
8. The one who burns it shall wash his clothes in water and cleanse his body in water, and he shall be unclean until evening.
9. A pure person shall gather the cow's ashes and place them outside the camp in a clean place, and It shall be as a keepsake for the congregation of the children of Israel for sprinkling water, [used] for cleansing.
10. The one who gathers the cow's ashes shall wash his clothes, and he shall be unclean until evening. It shall be an everlasting statute for the children of Israel and for the proselyte who resides in their midst.
11. Anyone touching the corpse of a human soul shall become unclean for seven days.
12. On the third and seventh days, he shall cleanse himself with it, so that he can become clean. But if he does not sprinkle himself with it on the third and seventh days, he shall not become clean.

This is the statute of the Torah

Rashi

Because Satan and the nations of the world taunt Israel, saying, "What is this commandment, and what purpose does it have?" Therefore, the Torah uses the term "statute." I have decreed it; You have no right to challenge it.

Rambam

Since all laws of the Torah are the products of G-d's intelligence, any human inability to comprehend them indicates the limitation of the student, not the Teacher.



פרק טז

א. וַיְדַבֵּר ה' אֶל מֹשֶׁה וְאֶל אַהֲרֹן לֵאמֹר: ב. זֹאת חֻקַּת הַתּוֹרָה אֲשֶׁר צִוָּה ה' לֵאמֹר דַּבֵּר אֶל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיִּקְחוּ אֵלֶיךָ פָּרָה אֲדָמָה תְּמִימָה אֲשֶׁר אֵין בָּהּ מוּם אֲשֶׁר לֹא עָלָה עָלֶיהָ עַל: ג. וּנְתַתֶּם אֹתָהּ אֶל אֱלֻעָזָר הַכֹּהֵן וְהוֹצִיא אֹתָהּ אֶל מַחוּץ לַמַּחֲנֶה וְשַׁחַט אֹתָהּ לִפְנֵיו: ד. וְלָקַח אֱלֻעָזָר הַכֹּהֵן מִדָּמָה בְּאֶצְבָּעוֹ וְהִזָּה אֶל נֹכַח פְּנֵי אֱהֵל מוֹעֵד מִדָּמָה שֶׁבַע פְּעָמִים: ה. וְשָׂרַף אֶת הַפָּרָה לְעֵינָיו אֶת עֵרְבָה וְאֶת בְּשָׂרָהּ וְאֶת דָּמָהּ עַל פְּרִשָׁה יִשְׂרָאֵל: ו. וְלָקַח הַכֹּהֵן עֵץ אֲרָז וְאֲזוּב וְשֵׁנִי תוֹלַעַת וְהִשְׁלִיךְ אֶל תוֹךְ שֹׂרַפַת הַפָּרָה: ז. וְכִבֶּס בְּגָדָיו הַכֹּהֵן וְרַחֵץ בְּשָׂרוֹ בַּמַּיִם וְאַחֵר יָבוֹא אֶל הַמַּחֲנֶה וְטָמֵא הַכֹּהֵן עַד הָעֶרֶב: ח. וְהִשְׂרַף אֹתָהּ יַכְבֵּס בְּגָדָיו בַּמַּיִם וְרַחֵץ בְּשָׂרוֹ בַּמַּיִם וְטָמֵא עַד הָעֶרֶב: ט. וְאַסֵּף אִישׁ טְהוֹר אֶת אִפְרֵי הַפָּרָה וְהֵנִיחַ מַחוּץ לַמַּחֲנֶה בְּמָקוֹם טְהוֹר וְהִיתָה לְעֵדוּת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לְמִשְׁמַרְתָּ לְמִי נִדָּה חֲטָאת הוּא: י. וְכִבֶּס הָאִסָּף אֶת אִפְרֵי הַפָּרָה אֶת בְּגָדָיו וְטָמֵא עַד הָעֶרֶב וְהִיתָה לְבִנְיָ יִשְׂרָאֵל וְלִגְרָ וְלִגְרָ בְּתוֹכָם לְחֻקַּת עוֹלָם: יא. הַנִּגְעַת בְּמַת לְכָל נֶפֶשׁ אָדָם וְטָמֵא שִׁבְעַת יָמִים: יב. הוּא יִתְחַטֵּא בּוֹ בַיּוֹם הַשְּׁלִישִׁי וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי יִטְהַר וְאִם לֹא יִתְחַטֵּא בַיּוֹם הַשְּׁלִישִׁי וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי לֹא יִטְהַר:

Speak to the children of Israel, that they bring to you a red heifer (19:2)

Mishneh Torah

Nine red heifers were prepared from the time that the Jewish people were commanded this mitzvah until the Second Temple was destroyed. The first was prepared by Moses, the second by Ezra, and another seven were prepared from Ezra until the Temple's destruction. The tenth Heifer will be prepared by Moshiach, may he speedily be revealed, Amen, may it be the will of G-d.

The kohen shall be unclean until evening

Midrash Tanchuma

All who are involved in the preparation of the heifer from beginning to the end, become impure, but the heifer itself purifies the impure! But G-d says: I have made a chok, decreed a decree, and you may not transgress My decrees.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe

The fact that the ashes of the heifer "purify the contaminated and contaminate the pure" carries an important lesson to us in our daily lives: If your fellow has been infected by impurity and corruption, do not hesitate to get involved and do everything within your power to rehabilitate him. If you are concerned that you may become tainted by your contact with him, remember that the Torah commands the kohen to purify his fellow Jew, even though his own level of purity will be diminished in the process.

A pure man shall gather the ash of the cow and place it outside the camp

Rashi

The ashes were divided into three parts; 1) was stored on Mount Olives for future use 2) another part was used for purifying the people 3) a third part was put away for safekeeping

The Lubavitcher Rebbe

In our dedication to community, we can forget that we too can become defiled. Moreover, when we help someone else, our role of benefactor can give us delusions of grandeur. Finally, we must not compromise our standards of purity in other areas when we defile ourselves for someone else. For all these reasons, a portion of the ashes of the red cow is to be kept as a reminder for those who undertake to purify their defiled brethren.

SUMMARY

- Be willing to ignore your own concerns to devote yourself selflessly to helping others lead pure and better lives. The purpose of Torah is to take humanity above all limits, to subdue our personal "I".
- Someone who looks spiritually lifeless is never beyond hope and can be purified.
- You too are vulnerable and are not immune to falling to a low level. Don't have any delusions of your own grandeur.
- When dedicating yourself to reaching out and helping others, don't neglect your own spiritual standing. Even while selflessly devoting yourself to others, make sure to safeguard time for your own spiritual and emotional growth and nurturing. Focus energy inward as well as outward.

