



# Parah

## One of the greatest parables I have ever read...

How can I accept irrational commandments?

This coming Shabbat will be Shabbat Parah, and we recall the time when Hashem gave us the mitzvah of the parah adumah, the red heifer. In an extraordinary fashion, the ashes of the heifer enabled people who were impure to become pure. But the Kohen who was administering the ashes started out being pure, and then he became impure.

What sense can we make of this? It's the same ashes, having the opposite effect on different people!

One of the greatest parables I've ever read is in a book called Mesillat Yesharim, written by the Ramchal, Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzzatto. I am going to modernise it a bit, and this is how it goes:

A man once came into an enormous maze. On the other side of the maze, there was a tall tower, and the aim of the game was to try to reach the tower. However, as he went along certain paths, try as he might, the paths always took him away from the tower. And then, just when he felt enormously lost, he suddenly heard a voice.

The voice said, "You can't see me, but I'm a man on the tower. With binoculars, I can see you, and I'm calling out to you with a megaphone. I can see every path. If you want to get to the tower, walk forward, then right, then backwards, and then left."

And the man felt lost in all these instructions. He thought to himself, "I want to get to the tower, but he's telling me to walk backwards..." So now he had a choice:

Either he was going to say, "This doesn't make sense. I'm going to do my own thing," or he was going to say, "Actually, that person can see everything. He can see things from a perspective I cannot. I better listen to him."

And indeed, that is the message of Shabbat Parah. There are quite a number of mitzvot in the Torah where the description of them is a Chok - it's somewhat irrational. It's illogical. We do it only because Hashem has commanded us to.

But we accept that Hashem is all-knowing. He can see everything. His megaphone is the Torah, and we are so blessed to have His instructions.

And even though sometimes they might not make sense, once we engage in them and immerse our lives within them, we find that we're on the highway to the tower of success, to the tower of our dreams, to a life full of meaning and joy.

So yes, some of the mitzvot might not make much sense, but they are Hashem's personal prescription for the best way of living.

Shabbat Shalom.