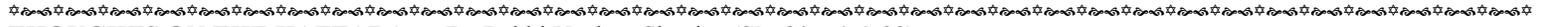


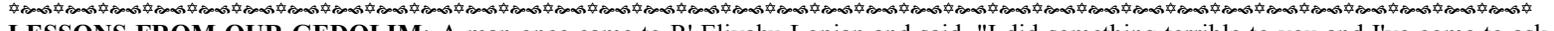
**HALACHA V'HALICHA...** By Rav Chaim Schabes

Rashi brings from the Midrash that the nations make fun of us because of the *chukim* that we do, since these have no logical reason behind them. Rav Laib Gurvitz ZT"l asked that there is a seeming contradiction in the *pasuk* in Vaeschanan: **כִּי הִיא חִמְתְּכֶם וּבִינְתְּכֶם לְעֵינֵי הָעַמִּים אֲשֶׁר** **יִשְׁמְעוּן אֶת הַחֻקִּים הָאֵלֶּה**, that the nations attribute our wisdom and understanding precisely to the practice of *chukim* which do not follow any human logic! The answer is, that initially, they mock at us because of these practices, but after they see the result of those who follows those seemingly foolish practices, how B'nai Yisrael become elevated morally and spiritually, they must admit that there is wisdom behind them. One is not allowed to follow the ways of the idol worshippers; some Rishonim learn this from the *pasuk* of **וְלֹא תִלְכוּ בַחֻקֹּת הַגּוֹיִם** (Rambam SH"m Lo Sa'ase 30 and Chinuch 262), while others count it as two *lavin* because of **לֹא תִלְכוּ בַחֻקֹּתֵיהֶם** (B'hag, Yeraim 313). Shulchan Aruch (YD 178) writes that one is not allowed to wear clothing that is specifically worn by the *goyim*, and Ram"za explains that that is referring to clothing that they use for the intention of *pritzus* (immorality), like wearing red clothing. The Shach says that it is not the way of *tzni'us* to wear red clothing, and brings from the Maharik that black is a color of humility. Wearing specific clothing that is just an arbitrary custom, without any special reason, may fall under the category of *darchai haEmori* and may have to do with their idol worshiping. However, if it has a benefit, for example, all doctors should wear white clothing for identification, it is fine (Ra"ma). One who finished eating and left over some pieces of bread on the table may not bring a loaf of bread to the table because that was the custom of the idol worshippers (YD 178:3). If a loaf was left on the table, though, some say that one does not need to remove it (Shach 5), while others hold that one should remove it (Magen Avraham 180:2), but on Shabbos everyone agrees that it is not necessary (MB 5). There were places that had a custom to set a table with food the night after a Bris Milah, and that falls into this prohibition, because idol worshippers also had this practice (Ra"ma ibid). Shach (6) says that to make a *se'uda* the night before the Bris Milah is permitted, as a *minhag*, but it is not considered a *se'udas mitzvah* (MB 551:62). There are many more practices that fall into this category. The Chinuch (262) holds that it is prohibited to go to circuses and theaters because of **לֹא תִלְכוּ בַחֻקֹּתֵיהֶם**, and Rav Yaakov Kamenetzky ZT"l said that this refers also to our circuses (B'mchitzas Rabainu pg. 96). One is not allowed to slaughter and spill the blood into a pit, because this was done for *avodah zarah* (YD 12:1). Many who fast on *erev* Rosh Hashanah are careful to eat before *alos hashachar*, to avoid the practice of the *goyim* to fast on the eve of their holiday (Ram"za OC 581:2). One should not specifically request a white rooster for *kaporos*, but if he is given a white one, it is fine (MB 605:4). There are those who say that walking without one's head covered is **חֻקֹּת הַגּוֹיִם** (Bach and Taz OC 8:3, and MB 2:11); even those who argue, agree that doing a *mitzvah* with the head uncovered is **חֻקֹּת הַגּוֹיִם** (N'ta Sorek OC 2), and Chasam Sofer (CM 191) writes that to *daven* with the head uncovered is **חֻקֹּת הַגּוֹיִם**. To play musical instruments in *shul* during *davening* is prohibited because of **בַחֻקֹּתֵיהֶם** (Maharam Shik YD 165, Melamed L'hoel OC 16). The *bimah* must be in the middle of the *shul*, not in the front, bec. of **בַחֻקֹּתֵיהֶם** (Divrai Malkiel 5:234, Lvushai Mordechai OC 2:86). A *sh'liach tzibur* should not wear a black robe (Mirkeves Hamishne, Hakdamah). Some prohibit making a *chupah* in *shul* bec. of this reason (Yehuda Yaale OC 38). Flowers in a *bais hakevaros* (Minchas Elazar 4:61, Minchas Yitzchak 1:31) and *availim* wearing black (Gesher Hachayim 1:161) are also considered **חֻקֹּת הַגּוֹיִם**.



**THOUGHTS ON THE HAFTARAH ...** By Rabbi Yaakov Shapiro (Shoftim 1:1-33)

Is making a vow a profitable thing to do? The Yalkut (247:68) on our Haftara comments that one who makes a vow can never be sure of its outcome. Chana, for example, gained from the vow she made and merited that Shmuel HaNavi be her son; Yiftach is cited as the archetype of one who vowed and lost out. Yiftach's vow, made before going out to battle Amon, was that the first thing that would exit his house to greet him upon his victorious return would be brought as a sacrifice to Hashem. Unfortunately, it was his daughter ran out to meet him before anything else. Yiftach wished to be true to his word and was ready to sacrifice his daughter, and she was willing to "do the right thing". What actually happened to her, though, is much disputed. Many *mefarshim* (Radak, Ralbag, Ibn Ezra and Abarbanel) say that it is unthinkable that she was actually killed by Yiftach; rather, she was sequestered away with no human contact save for four days a year, thus fulfilling his vow through her "*prishus*". This opinion clearly contradicts the Medrash Tanchuma, which states that Yiftach actually slaughtered and sacrificed her, an act that "earned" him the epithet "Am HaAretz" and sharp criticism from Hashem. How could Yiftach have come to such a conclusion? Chazal say that Yiftach was unsure of what to do, and his daughter suggested that he go to the *gadol hador*, Pinchas the Kohen Gadol, to see if he could find grounds to absolve Yiftach of his vow. Yiftach was willing to consult Pinchas, but felt that, as he was leader of the nation, Pinchas should come to him! Pinchas, who heard of Yiftach's predicament, was willing to absolve him of the vow, but felt that, as he was Kohen Gadol, Yiftach should go to him! Neither yielded; and an innocent girl died. For this arrogance both were punished: Pinchas lost the position he so jealously protected, and Yiftach contracted a disease that caused his limbs to fall from his body one by one until he died. The price of pride is indeed high!



**LESSONS FROM OUR GEDOLIM:** A man once came to R' Eliyahu Lopian and said, "I did something terrible to you and I've come to ask your forgiveness." R' Eliyahu replied: "I can say the standard **לך מהחול**", if you wish; but since you claim to have done something terrible, I'm afraid that wouldn't suffice. I suggest that you come back again in two weeks." The man returned at the appointed time; R' Eliyahu greeted him enthusiastically, saying, "I forgive you with my full heart and soul!" Perplexed, the man asked what had changed in the two weeks. R' Eliyahu explained: "During these weeks I increased my study of *Mussar* on the subject of forgiveness and the evil of bearing a grudge or harboring ill will. This enabled me to forgive you with total sincerity!"

