

Parashat Chukat / פרשת חקת

Shabbat Tammuz 7, 5767, June 23, 2007
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This Weeks Reading List:

Torah: Num 19:1-22:1

Haftarah: Judges 11:1-33

B'rit HaChadashah: John 3:10-21 Hebrews 9:11-28

Numbers 19:1-22

19:1 ADONAI said to Moshe and Aharon, 19:2 "This is the regulation from the Torah which ADONAI has commanded. Tell the people of Isra'el to bring you a young red female cow without fault or defect and which has never borne a yoke. 19:3 You are to give it to El'azar the cohen; it is to be brought outside the camp and slaughtered in front of him. 19:4 El'azar the cohen is to take some of its blood with his finger and sprinkle this blood toward the front of the tent of meeting seven times. 19:5 The heifer is to be burned to ashes before his eyes -its skin, meat, blood and dung is to be burned to ashes. 19:6 The cohen is to take cedar-wood, hyssop and scarlet yarn and throw them onto the heifer as it is burning up. 19:7 Then the cohen is to wash his clothes and himself in water, after which he may re-enter the camp; but the cohen will remain unclean until evening. 19:8 The person who burned up the heifer is to wash his clothes and himself in water, but he will remain unclean until evening. 19:9 A man who is clean is to collect the ashes of the heifer and store them outside the camp in a clean place. They are to be kept for the community of the people of Isra'el to prepare water for purification from sin. 19:10 The one who collected the ashes of the heifer is to wash his clothes and be unclean until evening. For the people of Isra'el and for the foreigner staying with them this will be a permanent regulation. 19:11 "Anyone who touches a corpse, no matter whose dead body it is, will be unclean for seven days. 19:12 He must purify himself with [these ashes] on the third and seventh days; then he will be clean. But if he does not purify himself the third and seventh days, he will not be clean. 19:13 Anyone who touches a corpse, no matter whose dead body it is, and does not purify himself has defiled the tabernacle of ADONAI. That person will be cut off from Isra'el, because the water for purification was not sprinkled on him. He will be unclean; his uncleanness is still on him. 19:14 "This is the law: when a person dies in a tent, everyone who enters the tent and everything in the tent will be unclean for seven days. 19:15 Every open container without a cover closely attached is unclean. 19:16 Also whoever is in an open field and touches a corpse, whether of someone killed by a weapon or of someone who died naturally, or the bone of a person, or a grave, will be unclean for seven days. 19:17 "For the unclean person they are to take some of the ashes of the animal burned up as a purification from sin and add them to fresh water in a container. 19:18 A clean person is to take a bunch of hyssop leaves, dip it in the water and sprinkle it on the tent, on all the containers, on the people who were there, and on the person who touched the bone or the person killed or the one who died naturally or the grave. 19:19 The clean person will sprinkle the unclean person

on the third and seventh days. On the seventh day he will purify him; then he will wash his clothes and himself in water; and he will be clean at evening. 19:20 The person who remains unclean and does not purify himself will be cut off from the community because he has defiled the sanctuary of ADONAI. The water for purification has not been sprinkled on him; he is unclean. 19:21 This is to be a permanent regulation for them. The person who sprinkles the water for purification is to wash his clothes. Whoever touches the water for purification will be unclean until evening. 19:22 Anything the unclean person touches will be unclean, and anyone who touches him will be unclean until evening."

While reading parshat chukat the first part of the parsha tweaked my curiosity. There appears to be a paradox of sorts here within these verses. The red female cow (red heifer) is burned to ashes. Then one who is clean collects the ashes that are clean, and takes the ashes to a clean place. The person who took the ashes then becomes unclean from touching the ashes. The ashes are to be used to prepare water for the purification of sin. Whoever touches the water with the ashes becomes unclean. And yet, the water of purification is used to make one clean before entering the temple after having touched some dead thing. This seems to be a paradox in the sense that the water with ashes can make one both clean and unclean.

The Hebrew text reveals something, why this text is so mysterious. This red heifer is more than a commandment; it is an ordinance (חוקה) that is to be followed without question.

252	במדבר	18. 29-19. 11
<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; font-size: small;"> 29 לאֲהַרְן֙ הַכֹּהֵן׃ מִכֹּל֙ מִתְּנִיכֶם תְּרִימוּ אֶת־פְּלִתְרוֹמֹתַי יְהוָה׃ 30 מִכֹּל־חֶלְבֹו אֲתִימְקֹדְשׁוּ מִמֶּנּוּ׃ וְאָמַרְתָּ אֱלֹהִים בְּהַרְיִמְכֶם </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; font-size: small;"> אֲתִיחֶלְבֹו מִמֶּנּוּ וְנִחַשְׁב־לְלוּיִם בְּתִבְאוֹתַי גֵּרִין וּבְתִבְאוֹתַי יָקֹב׃ 31 וְאָכַלְתֶּם אֹתוֹ בְּכָל־מְקוֹם אֲתֶם וּבִיתְכֶם כִּי־שֹׁכֵר הוּא לָכֶם </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; font-size: small;"> חֶלֶף עֲבַדְתֶּם בְּאֹהֶל מוֹעֵד׃ וְלֹא־תִשְׂאוּ עָלָיו חֲטָא בְּהַרְיִמְכֶם 32 אֲתִיחֶלְבֹו מִמֶּנּוּ וְאֲתִימְקֹדְשׁוּ בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל לֹא תִחַלְלוּ וְלֹא </div> <div style="text-align: right; font-size: small;">תִּמּוֹתָיו׃</div>		
<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; font-size: small;"> 25, 26 וַיִּדְבֹר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה וְאֶל־אַהֲרֹן לֵאמֹר׃ וְאֵת חֻקַּת הַתּוֹרָה 2, 2 אֲשֶׁר־צִוִּיתִי יְהוָה לֵאמֹר דַּבֵּר אֶל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְיִקְחוּ אֵלֶיךָ פָּרָה </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; font-size: small;"> אֲדָמָה תְּמִימָה אֲשֶׁר אֵין־בָּהּ מוֹם אֲשֶׁר לֹא־עָלָה עָלֶיהָ עַל־ </div>		

The Talmudic commentaries suggest a link between the red heifer and the sin of the Golden Calf. (See Exodus chapter 32) The golden calf was burned and pulverized into a powder. The gold powder was then sprinkled into water and the Israelites were forced to drink it. Modern chemistry has revealed to us that when gold is grown into a very fine powder and sprinkled in water, the water becomes red as blood. This is a very interesting insight that the water the Israelites drank probably looked blood red. The powdered form of the red heifer that is mixed with water could very well be an analogy of what happened before Mount Sinai. Red is commonly used to represent sin for example in Isaiah 1:18:

Isaiah 1:18

1:18 "Come now," says ADONAI, "let's talk this over together. Even if your sins are like scarlet, they will be white as snow; even if they are red as crimson, they will be like wool.

The ashes and water by themselves do not purify (cleanse), it is by the ordinance of God that they purify. Therefore, the purifying power of the Red Heifer is a decree of God. In the Torah, it was taken by faith the ashes of the red heifer would cleanse one from being unclean by touching a dead body. All throughout the Torah we can see faith is the mechanism God uses to make us clean and to forgive us of our sins.

One of the roles of the Torah is to teach us justification by faith. We can see that with the red heifer, and we find the culmination of the instruction of Torah in the Messiah Yeshua. The writer of the book of Hebrews understood the ultimate purpose of the Torah.

Hebrews 10:1-10

10:1 For the Torah has in it a shadow of the good things to come, but not the actual manifestation of the originals. Therefore, it can never, by means of the same sacrifices repeated endlessly year after year, bring to the goal those who approach the Holy Place to offer them. 10:2 Otherwise, wouldn't the offering of those sacrifices have ceased? For if the people performing the service had been cleansed once and for all, they would no longer have sins on their conscience. 10:3 No, it is quite the contrary - in these sacrifices is a reminder of sins, year after year. 10:4 For it is impossible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins. 10:5 This is why, on coming into the world, he says, "It has not been your will to have an animal sacrifice and a meal offering; rather, you have prepared for me a body. 10:6 No, you have not been pleased with burnt offerings and sin offerings. 10:7 Then I said, 'Look! In the scroll of the book it is written about me. I have come to do your will.'" 10:8 In saying first, "You neither willed nor were pleased with animal sacrifices, meal offerings, burnt offerings and sin offerings," things which are offered in accordance with the Torah; 10:9 and then, "Look, I have come to do your will"; he takes away the first system in order to set up the second. 10:10 It is in connection with this will that we have been separated for God and made holy, once and for all, through the offering of Yeshua the Messiah's body. (CJB)

The Torah is our custodian which brings us to Yeshua the Messiah through justification by faith that He is the Holy One of God, who laid his life down, and shed his blood for sins. Yeshua is the fulfillment of the revelation in the Torah. If you want to find salvation in God's atoning sacrifice today. Follow along in prayer, with all your heart, with all your soul and your entire mind:

Heavenly Father,

I come before you a sinner seeking your grace and mercy. I have read your Torah; I recognize that I am a sinful man/woman. I desire to seek and draw near unto you. Please forgive me of my sins in Yeshua's name. I believe your Messiah Yeshua is the living Word of God. I believe Yeshua the Messiah laid his life down for mine, that his blood was shed for my sins. I believe three days later Yeshua rose from the grave victorious

over death. I believe you have forgiven me by the blood of the atonement you have provided for me in the offering of the Messiah Yeshua. I thank you from the bottom of my heart! In Yeshua the Messiah's name I pray. Amen!

If you have said that prayer, I would like to welcome you to the family of God. As a new believer in Yeshua, the Lord will begin to work in your life to draw you nearer to him. Be blessed in your new found faith in Yeshua Hamoshiach, the Holy One of God.

הללויה לאדוננו מורנו ורבינו ישוע מלך המשיח לעולם ועד:

Hallelujah for our Lord, our Teacher, our Rabbi,
"Yeshua" King Messiah for ever and ever