

Shavua Tov



A Rood Awakening! Torah Commentary
By Glenn McWilliams

Torah Portion: *Chukat* **חֻקֵי** “Statute”

Speak to the Israelites and have them bring you a completely red cow, which has no blemish, and which has never had a yoke on it.

Zot **chukat** hatorah asher-tzivah Adonay lemor daber el-beney Yisra'el veyikchu eleycha farah adumah tmimah asher eyn-bah mum asher lo-alah aleyha ol.

Scripture for study: *Bamidbar* (Numbers) 19:1 – 22:1
Haftorah Portion for study: *Shoftim* (Judges) 11:1 – 33

Let me begin this week’s study with an apology to anyone I may offend by quoting from a Christian writer who uses the “J” word and the “C” word. I understand that these words have become offensive to many who study the Torah. But I also understand that YHWH has been revealing Himself for centuries, and that many who in times past identified themselves as “Christian” were blessed with unique revelations that continue to help us understand our Creator, Redeemer, Savior, and Messiah. Wisdom is wisdom in my mind, regardless of where it is found.

The testimony of Scripture is filled with stories of people who were not part of the children of Israel whom the Holy One used to bring forth His revelation and purposes: Pharaoh, Jethro, Balaam, Rahab, Ruth, Artaxerxes, and Cyrus are but a few of the outsiders whom YHWH used to reveal Himself. Watchman Nee was a Christian evangelist, pastor, teacher, preacher, and martyr of the faith who lived and died in China (1903-1972). He was a profound thinker and prolific writer, both of which were great accomplishments given the fact that he lived, wrote, and taught in the heat of oppression in communist China. In his classic book The Normal Christian Life, Nee begins by raising the question:

What is the normal Christian life? We do well at the outset to ponder this question. The object of these studies is to show that it is something very different from the life of the average Christian. Indeed a consideration of the written Word of God – of the Sermon on the Mount for example – should lead us to ask whether such a life has ever in fact been lived upon the earth, save only by the Son of God himself.¹

Nee goes on to demonstrate the fact that the only one who has truly lived the normal “Christian” life is Messiah himself. What becomes blatantly clear through the pondering of this question is the reality that we have accepted as “normal” that which we experience instead of that which the Creator willed. For centuries the Christian Church has taught that Yeshua’s dominion over life and the elements of creation, whether physical or spiritual, was proof of his divinity. We witness the many miracles of healing, changing water into wine, walking on water, stilling storms, raising the dead, and casting out demons and label these actions as evidence of the “supernatural.” Noah Webster’s American Dictionary of the English Language (1825) defines the word “super” as a “Latin preposition which signifies something as being above, over, or in excess.” Webster likewise defines the word “nature” as:

Pertaining to nature; produced or effected by nature, or by the laws of growth, formation or motion impressed on bodies or beings by divine power. Thus we speak of the natural growth of animals or plants; the natural motion of a gravitating body; natural strength or disposition; the natural heat of the body; natural color; natural beauty. In this sense, natural is opposed to artificial.²

Using these early definitions we may assert that the compound word “supernatural” would mean something over and above a divinely given power or ability. Comparing this early definition of “supernatural” with the definition given in the Webster’s New Twentieth Century Dictionary, we see a radical contrast.

*Supernatural, a. [LL. Supernaturalis, from L. super, above, and natura, nature.]
1. existing or occurring outside the normal experience or knowledge of man; caused by other than the known forces of nature.³*

Note the radical change of reference point between these two definitions. In the first and older definition, “supernatural” means being above or beyond that which the Creator imbued in His creation. In the second and more modern definition, the reference point is no longer the Creator but man himself. In modern understanding the supernatural is anything that seems beyond man’s understanding or experience. The difference between these two definitions significantly impacts the way we understand and relate to our world, our Creator, and our Messiah.

As we have already stated, for decades if not centuries the Church has pointed to the miracles of Yeshua and claimed them as proof of his divinity. This is so because the Church has largely adopted the newer definition of “supernatural.” The teachers of the Church would reason that Yeshua’s power to perform miracles is largely outside of or beyond the knowledge and experience of man; thus by definition these actions must be “supernatural” or above the nature of man, and therefore of a divine nature or origin. But is this what the Torah teaches? To answer this question let us return to the beginning – to the creation of man.

Genesis 1:26 And Elohim said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. ²⁷So Elohim created man in His own image, in the image of Elohim created He him; male and female created He them. ²⁸And Elohim blessed them, and Elohim said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.

Here we see a clear definition of what it means to be “man,” or *adam* in Hebrew. There is nothing more “natural” than being in the state that the Creator created us in. Here we see that “natural man” or *adam* was given dominion over the creatures of the earth. From this I would suggest that *adam* or “natural man” was also able to perform many other powerful deeds. It is important for us to realize that many men performed miracles even before Yeshua was born. Moses performed numerous signs and wonders in the presence of the children of Israel and before the eyes of Pharaoh.⁴

- His staff becomes a snake – Exodus 4:3; 7:12
- His hand becomes leprous – Exodus 4:6-7
- The ten plagues – Exodus 7:14-12:36
- The parting of the Red Sea – Exodus 14:21
- Made bitter water sweet – Exodus 15:25
- Provided Manna and Quail – Exodus 16
- Brought water from a rock – Exodus 17:6

Elijah and Elisha likewise performed numerous miracles during their ministry.⁵

- Elijah declares a draught – 1 Kings 17:1
- Multiplies the widow’s flour and oil – 1 Kings 17:7-16
- Resurrects the widow’s son – 1 Kings 17:17-24
- Calls fire down from heaven – 1 Kings 18:1-40
- Sends a rainstorm – 1 Kings 18:41-45
- Outruns the chariot of Ahab – 1 Kings 18:46
- Predicts Ahaziah’s death – 2 Kings 1:1-4

- Ahaziah's men killed by fire from heaven – 2 Kings 1:9-17
- Parts the Jordan River – 2 Kings 2:1-8
- Elisha parts the Jordan River – 2 Kings 2:13-14
- Makes the Jericho spring drinkable – 2 Kings 2:19-22
- Sends bears to punish irreverent youths – 2 Kings 2:23-25
- Floods ditches to confuse the Moabites – 2 Kings 3:1-27
- Multiplies the widow's oil – 2 Kings 4:1-7
- The Shunammite woman bears a son – 2 Kings 4:8-17
- Resurrects the Shunammite's son – 2 Kings 4:18-37
- Purifies poisoned stew – 2 Kings 4:38-44
- Heals Naaman's leprosy – 2 Kings 5:1-14
- Gehazi is struck with leprosy – 2 Kings 5:15-27
- Floats a lost axe head – 2 Kings 6:1-7
- Gives sight to the king's messenger – 2 Kings 6:16-17
- Blinds the Syrian army – 2 Kings 6:8-23
- His bones resurrect a dead man – 2 Kings 13:20-21

There are numerous other examples of men exercising dominion over the elements of nature as Elohim first commanded Adam. While these men clearly performed miraculous works, we would not claim divinity for any of them. Let me be clear that I am not making any statement at all concerning the divinity of Messiah Yeshua. The point that I am trying to make is that the things we have come to call miracles are not a sign of divinity nor are they supernatural. These miraculous actions are merely natural man exercising his Elohim-given dominion. In other words, these miracles are not a sign of divinity but of natural humanity. What becomes quite evident through these examples is the fact that the men who perform these signs, wonders, and miracles were all men that lived in communion with the Creator.

We should note here that *adam* or “natural man” lived in direct communication with Elohim. The Spirit Elohim⁶ spoke to the spirit of Adam and imparted to him all necessary knowledge and skills.

We witness this truth later in the Torah during the building of the tabernacle.

Exodus 31:1 And YHWH spake unto Moses, saying, ²See, I have called by name Bezaleel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah: ³and I have filled him with the spirit of Elohim, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship, ⁴to devise cunning works, to work in gold, and in silver, and in brass, ⁵and in cutting of stones, to set them, and in carving of timber, to work in all manner of workmanship. ⁶And I, behold, I have given with him Aholiab, the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan: and in the hearts of all that are wise hearted I have put wisdom, that they may make all that I have commanded thee.

Man eating from the tree of life, living in the Garden of Eden with his helpmate, communing with his Creator and Sustainer, living by the exclusive Word of Elohim, and exercising dominion over creation is the life of “natural man.” This is man as Elohim created him to be. Again, nothing could be more natural than this. But Adam did not live long in this “natural” state of being. The Torah tells us that there were two trees in the garden; the tree of life and the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

Genesis 2:9 And out of the ground made YHWH Elohim to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

Genesis 2:16 And YHWH ELOHIM commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: ¹⁷but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.

We should remember that these two trees represent two ways of living before the Creator. To eat of the fruit of the tree of life means that we live exclusively by the Word of Elohim. To eat of the tree of life is to live as natural man or as Elohim created man to live. To eat of the fruit of the forbidden tree of the knowledge of good and evil means that we desire to live by the Word of Elohim mixed with ANOTHER word. It was the addition of another seed or word to man that is to be considered “supernatural,” or over and above the natural. What we should come to understand is that we have in many ways reversed the meanings of “natural” and “supernatural.” “Natural” man had dominion and power over the elements of creation. What we have come to understand as miraculous is what the Creator intended to be “natural” for natural man. “Supernatural” man is a fallen creature who worships the elements of nature and is sadly in bondage to the these elements.

Watchman Nee astutely recognized that what we now consider to be a “normal” life is in reality an abnormal life caused by the fall of natural or normal man. Since we have sunken so far below normal or natural when we see evidence of it, it appears to us as something out of the ordinary or beyond the norm. This perception is so only because we are judging things in reference to ourselves instead of from the point of view of the Creator.

Our language provides a good example of this principle. For many of those reading this study, the Hebrew language (the natural language of the children of Israel) is considered a “foreign” language. We have been living in exile so long we have come to feel at home with the language of our exile. In a like manner we have become so accustomed to our fallen life that it seems normal to us, while the truly “normal life” seems something strange and unfamiliar to us. When Adam ate of the fruit of the tree

of knowledge of good and evil, his eyes were opened. Now fallen man lives by his senses. Thus our reference point has changed from the Word of Elohim to what we see and experience with our own eyes, senses, and reason.

While it may appear to fallen man that death is the inevitable outcome of life, this is not so. In the Garden of Eden man was given a choice between two trees; one tree bringing life, the other bringing death. Even now man is confronted with a choice as to whether to live according to the Word of Elohim which sanctifies life, or to live by a mixture of the Word of Elohim and human reason, which ultimately still leads to death. I mention all of this because I believe understanding this reality will help us to understand the very mysterious teaching of the red heifer. Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch likewise understood this truth.

We advance the opinion that freedom of will in matters of morality is the first and indispensable condition for that hallowing of our lives after which the Law of God commands us to strive.⁷

It seemed to us that the first and most basic of all truths according to which we are to fashion our lives is threatened by the fact that all men must die, and by the physical sight of a human corpse, for these realities would tell the superficial, limited human intelligence that all things in the universe, including man, are dominated by the forces of nature. Now if death were to mean that the whole man has died, if the dead body lying before us overwhelmed by the compelling forces of nature represented all that there is to man, then man, even during his lifetime, would be no different from any other living thing. He would be under the spell of a universally compelling necessity. If all this were indeed so, then this physical "must" would not leave room for any moral "thou shalt." Then moral freedom of will would be an illusion, and the entire God-given moral law, with its demands for a totally free-willed dedication of one's existence and aspirations to the fire of the sanctuary that gives light, warmth, life, and happiness by shaping and purifying man's existence, would be inconceivable.⁸

What Hirsch is saying is that if we are fooled into looking at and understanding life and death only from our fallen reason, then surely the physical evidence will convince us that death is the natural and only outcome of life. If, however, we choose to live our lives based upon the Word of Elohim, then we shall certainly see something far different as the purpose of and outcome of life.

As far back as I can remember, whether at the death of a pet, grandparent, parishioner, parent, brother, friend, or even a total stranger, some well-intended soul has sought to bring comfort by teaching the adage that death is just a part of life. From a reference point egocentrically based upon the experience of sinful man, death is indeed the natural or normal conclusion to the gift of life. But again this is contrary to the

Scriptures. Death is not a natural part of life. Death is the opposite of life. Death has no part in life.

Death is something introduced to creation by fallen man. Death was an addition to life. Death is unnatural and contrary to the will of the Creator. Death was not found in the fruit of the tree of life, but in the forbidden mixed fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

***Genesis 2:16** And YHWH ELOHIM commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: ¹⁷but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.*

***Genesis 3:17** And unto Adam He said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; ¹⁸thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; ¹⁹in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.*

YHWH has made it clear that He takes no delight in death, not even in the death of the wicked. Instead, the Holy One desires that all men would return to the tree of life and live.

***Ezekiel 18:23** Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith Adonai YHWH: and not that he should return from his ways, and live?*

***Ezekiel 18:32** For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith Adonai YHWH: wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye.*

***Ezekiel 33:11** Say unto them, As I live, saith Adonai YHWH, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?*

***Deuteronomy 30:19** I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live.*

In the teaching of the red heifer we again witness the truth that death is part of the defilement of natural life. We have seen this teaching earlier concerning the *cohanim*⁹ and the *Cohen Gadol*.¹⁰

Leviticus 21:1 And YHWH said unto Moses, Speak unto the cohanim the sons of Aaron, and say unto them, There shall none be defiled for the dead among his people.

Leviticus 21:10 And he that is the Cohen Gadol among his brethren, upon whose head the anointing oil was poured, and that is consecrated to put on the garments, shall not uncover his head, nor rend his clothes; ¹¹neither shall he go in to any dead body, nor defile himself for his father, or for his mother.

Clearly death belongs to the realm of *tamei*.

Numbers 19:11 He that toucheth the dead body of any man shall be unclean seven days.

Here we must again clearly understand the distinction between *tahor* and *tamei*. While generally translated as “clean” and “unclean,” these words are really a description of two realms or states of being. Those things that are consistent with and useful for us in embodying the image of YHWH in the world are designated as being “clean,” or *tahor*. Those things or circumstances that are inconsistent with or not useful for embodying the image of YHWH in the world are designated as being “unclean,” or *tamei*. Death clearly belongs to the realm of *tamei*. There are numerous things that may render a person *tamei*, such as sickness, bodily emissions, non-kosher food, childbirth, and death.

In most instances a person who is designated as being in a state of *tamei* simply washes and is restored to a state of *tahor* at evening. The state of *tamei* separates a person from the altar and the sacrifices. Remembering that the purpose of the altar is to demonstrate and proclaim our desire to draw near to YHWH, we may safely state that being in a state of *tamei* prevents us from drawing near unto YHWH. This is especially true of death. Death is the ultimate state of *tamei*. Death has no place in the image of the living Elohim. Death prevents us from drawing near to YHWH.

To overcome this separation due to contamination by a corpse, YHWH instituted the most peculiar ritual of the red heifer. The rabbis have for years admitted that they do not fully understand this ritual; thus it is referred to as a *chukat* (Chet, Kof, Tav), which is a commandment that is given without any explanation. As we shall see in the following story, the rabbis often simply fall back on the idea that there are some commandments that are to be done simply out of obedience and not from understanding.

A heathen questioned Rabban Johanan Ben Zakkai, saying, “The things you Jews do appear to be a kind of sorcery. A cow is brought, it is burned, is pounded into ash, and its ash is gathered up. Then when one of you gets defiled by contact with a corpse, two or three drops of the ash mixed with water are sprinkled upon him,

and he is told, 'You are cleansed!'" Rabban Johanan asked the heathen; "Has the spirit of madness ever possessed you?" He replied, "No." "Have you ever seen a man whom the spirit of madness has possessed?" The heathen replied, "Yes." "And what do you do for such a man?" "Roots are brought, the smoke of their burning is made to rise about him, and water is sprinkled upon him until the spirit of madness flees." Rabban Johanan then said; "Do not your ears hear what your mouth is saying? It is the same with a man who is defiled by contact with a corpse – he, too, is possessed by a spirit, the spirit of uncleanness, and Scripture says, 'I will make (false) prophets as well as the unclean spirit vanish from the land (Zech. 13:2).'" Now when the heathen left, Rabban Johanan's disciples said, "Our master, you put off that heathen with a mere reed of an answer [lit. 'You shoved aside that heathen with a reed'], but what answer will you give us?" Rabban Johanan answered; "By your lives, I swear: The corpse does not have the power by itself to defile, nor does the mixture of ash and water have the power by itself to cleanse. The truth is that the purifying power of the red cow is a decree. 'You are not permitted to transgress My decree.' This is the ritual law (Num. 19:1)."¹¹

Nehama Leibowitz offers some insight into the meaning of this story.

The heathen required a rational explanation, appealing to his common sense. The Torah's defilement is a kind of disease or evil spirit. The red heifer's ashes are not more than a kind of cure for the disease, a demon-repellent. But he could tell his disciples, students of the Torah and who accepted its yoke, the truth. Uncleanness is not an integral part of nature, neither in the corpse nor in the one who comes in contact with it. It is not a demon or pest originating in the corpse itself. The ashes of the heifer and the waters of the sin-offering have no intrinsic purificatory properties. It is a divine commandment. That alone determines the defilement of the corpse and the purificatory properties of the ashes. It is the commandments that refine the human soul.¹²

According to both Rabban Johanan and Nehama Leibowitz, the Holy One has issued a commandment for no other reason than for us to keep it. While I agree that keeping the commandments does indeed refine the soul, I believe YHWH has instituted this particular rite with more in mind than just our blind obedience. Let us therefore turn our attention to this *chukat* and seek some understanding.

Having already established that fact that death does not belong to life, is inconsistent with the image of Elohim, and that contact with the dead renders one *tamei*, let us look briefly at the process of restoring a person to the state of *tahor*.

YHWH commands that a red heifer without spot or blemish and upon which no yoke has ever been laid be brought and given to the *cohen*. The *cohen* is to bring the heifer outside the camp. There the heifer is to be slain, and the *cohen* is to sprinkle the blood

with his finger toward the tabernacle seven times. Then another person is to burn the heifer completely.

Numbers 19:5 And one shall burn the heifer in his sight; her skin, and her flesh, and her blood, with her dung, shall he burn.

The *cohen* casts cedar wood, hyssop, and scarlet wool into the midst of the fire with the heifer. The *cohen* then washes his clothes and his flesh, and returns to the camp and is considered *tamei* until the evening. The person that burned the heifer likewise will wash his clothes and flesh and be considered *tamei* until evening. After the burning, a man that is *tahor* will come and gather up all of the ashes and store them in a clean place. This man too shall wash his clothes and be *tamei* until the evening. This is the process of making the ashes.

The next process is that of application. The Torah commands that whenever a person comes in contact with a corpse they are to cleanse themselves.

Numbers 19:11 He that toucheth the dead body of any man shall be unclean seven days. ¹²He shall purify himself with it on the third day, and on the seventh day he shall be clean: but if he purify not himself the third day, then the seventh day he shall not be clean. ¹³Whosoever toucheth the dead body of any man that is dead, and purifieth not himself, defileth the tabernacle of YHWH; and that soul shall be cut off from Israel: because the water of separation was not sprinkled upon him, he shall be unclean; his uncleanness is yet upon him.

The application was accomplished by mixing some of the ashes of the red heifer in living water and then sprinkling this water upon the contaminated person.

Numbers 19:9 And a man that is clean shall gather up the ashes of the heifer, and lay them up without the camp in a clean place, and it shall be kept for the congregation of the children of Israel for a **water of separation**: it is a purification for sin.

Numbers 19:16 And whosoever toucheth one that is slain with a sword in the open fields, or a dead body, or a bone of a man, or a grave, shall be unclean seven days. ¹⁷And for an unclean person they shall take of the ashes of the burnt heifer of purification for sin, and **running water** shall be put thereto in a vessel: ¹⁸and a clean person shall take hyssop, and dip it in the water, and sprinkle it upon the tent, and upon all the vessels, and upon the persons that were there, and upon him that touched a bone, or one slain, or one dead, or a grave: ¹⁹and the clean person shall sprinkle upon the unclean on the third day, and on the seventh day: and on the seventh day he shall purify himself, and wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water, and shall be clean at even.

We also witness here once again that the person sprinkling the water of purification becomes *tamei*, and must wash and be *tamei* until evening.

Numbers 19:21 And it shall be a perpetual statute unto them, that he that sprinkleth the water of separation shall wash his clothes; and he that toucheth the water of separation shall be unclean until even. ²²And whatsoever the unclean person toucheth shall be unclean; and the soul that toucheth it shall be unclean until even.

There are numerous questions to be answered in this portion, but before we attempt to answer them, let me reiterate the idea that all of the sacrifices and rituals of the Torah are primarily proclamation. In other words, the various rituals and sacrifices of the Torah are **VISIBLE WORDS**. Therefore as we seek to answer some of the questions concerning the ritual of the red heifer, let us also look and listen for the proclamation that is being made. Let us now see if we can answer a few of the primary questions concerning the red heifer ritual, and in the process come to a deeper understanding of the significance of this particular *chukat*.

The first question we should address is the question of why a heifer. Answering this question will help us to understand a big part of the proclamation of this ritual. We should take note that the ashes of this ritual were intended for use by the whole congregation of Israel as a purification of sin.

Numbers 19:9 And a man that is clean shall gather up the ashes of the heifer, and lay them up without the camp in a clean place, and it shall be kept **for the congregation of the children of Israel for a water of separation: it is a purification for sin.**

Thus we may compare this slaughtering to the various sin offerings. The opening chapters of the book of Leviticus tells us that when the *Cohen Gadol* sins through ignorance he is to offer a young bullock for an offering; when the whole congregation sins through ignorance they are to offer a young bullock; when the ruler sins through ignorance he is to bring a male kid goat; and if any of the common people sin through ignorance they are to offer a female kid goat.¹³ From this we may deduce that since the ashes of the heifer are for the whole congregation of Israel, a large animal is needed to produce a large amount of ashes. Since the *Cohen Gadol* offers a bullock and is forbidden from defiling himself with the dead, a heifer is used to distinguish this offering from that of the *Cohen Gadol*. But that a female bovine and a female goat are used for the sin offering of the common people also has another significant message.

We should remember that Israel is the covenanted wife of YHWH. Let us not forget the wedding at Sinai. We should also remember that part of the proclamation of the sacrificial system is that YHWH desires us to draw near to Him, and therefore has made

provision to restore us to intimacy and closeness with Him. In the ritual of the red heifer we see that the provision is a female. This single fact has befuddled many Christian scholars, but the truth is that it points directly at Messiah, who belongs to the bride. Yeshua is a member of the children of Israel. Many Christians have forgotten this fact, choosing instead to see "Jesus" as the first Christian. But the reality is that Yeshua is a part of the body of the children of Israel, who is clearly the bride or wife of YHWH. Which part of the body is he? He is the head. Since this bride has been separated from YHWH by the defilement of sin, Yeshua came to take on the sin of the bride. Therefore we see the heifer reminding us that YHWH'S provision for our sin will come through the one who is the head of the bride.

A second question we may ask is why the heifer has to be red. To answer this question we need to look at the Hebrew language. In Hebrew the heifer is referred to as being *adumah* (Aleph, Dalet, Mem, Hey), meaning "red." These are the same letters, albeit with one different vowel, which spell the word *adamah*, or "earth," out of which Adam was created.

Genesis 2:7 And YHWH ELOHIM formed ADAM of the dust of the ADAMAH, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.

Here we witness a beautiful Hebrew word pun. Adam and *adamah* come from the same root word. There are several Hebrew words that share this common root.

- ADAMAH - Red clay or earth
- ADOM - Red, masculine gender
- ADUMAH - Red, feminine gender
- ADAM - Adam or man
- EDOM - Esau, also called Edom
- DAM - Blood
- DAMAM - Death

By commanding that this heifer (female) be *adumah* (red), we are instantly taken back to Adam in the Garden of Eden and to the fall that brought death into the world. We are also reminded that the consequence of this fall is that our bodies shall return to the *adamah* (earth) from which they came. But the *adumah* (red) color should also remind us of *dam* (blood). We should note here that in all of the other sin sacrifices the blood is placed upon the altar, but in this slaughtering the blood is burned with the rest of the animal.

Numbers 19:5 And one shall burn the heifer in his sight; her skin, and her flesh, and her blood, with her dung, shall he burn.

We should ask why the blood was burned and not placed upon the altar. Again, many Christian and even Messianic believers have stumbled over the fact that Messiah's blood was not placed upon the altar of the Temple. There have been some who have rejected the efficacy of Messiah's sacrifice because his blood was not placed upon the altar. But here we see that YHWH'S provision to remove from us the defilement of death would come from blood shed outside the camp. The red of the heifer is to remind us that by blood spilled outside the camp we shall be restored to the state of Adam in the Garden of Eden. In all, we are reminded by *adumah* (red) that the head of the bride will shed his *dam* (blood) outside the camp; that by his *damam* (death) he may remove the separation of *damam* (death) and restore us again to a state of being *adam* (natural man), living in the proper created order and in communion with his Creator.

We have already noted that everyone involved in the process of creating the ashes or in the application of the ashes becomes unclean. Each of these processes has a unique proclamation. First let us look at the fact that all that are involved in making the ashes become *tamei*. This teaches that those who were involved in the crucifixion of the Messiah were rendered *tamei*.

John 18:28 Then led they Yeshua from Caiaphas unto the hall of judgment: and it was early; and they themselves went not into the judgment hall, lest they should be defiled; but that they might eat the passover.

Those who apply the ashes to cleanse those who are contaminated by death proclaim the reality that the one who would remove our sins would himself be contaminated.

2 Corinthians 5:21 For He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of Elohim in him.

We also witness that into the ashes of the red heifer are thrown cedar wood, hyssop, and scarlet wool. All of these have symbolic significance. On one level we may see these things as relating to specific sins. The cedar tree is a tall tree that towers above all others, therefore the cedar stick may represent the sin of pride. The hyssop is a lowly shrub that spreads out upon the ground, therefore the hyssop could represent the sin of extreme humility. The scarlet thread could represent the binding of these two extremes together to create balance in our lives. But we may also see in these elements a proclamation of Messiah. The cedar wood depicts the cross, the hyssop the bitter herbs he was presented, and the scarlet wool reminds us of the lamb led to the slaughter.

Finally we should note that these ashes had no effect until they were mixed with living water. Here we see a twofold proclamation. First we should see in these instructions a proclamation of the resurrection. He who was slaughtered is filled with living water. Torah is a living Word. Yeshua was the Word made flesh. As members of the body of Messiah we too are called to be the living Word. We should realize that the sacrifice of

Messiah (ashes) will do us no good unless we apply them to our heart through a living faith and willingness to live the TORAH. In this Nehama Leibowitz was correct. It is the living Torah that sanctifies and refines our lives. To claim or plead the blood of Yeshua over one's soul without returning to the Torah is ineffectual. The living Word must be applied to one's life in order to be restored to our natural state of *tahor*.

Understanding that every detail of this phenomenal *chukat* is a proclamation of Messiah and his ministry means that we shall keep this teaching not merely out of blind obedience, but out of faithfulness to our calling to be the body of Messiah in the world. For those who are living in a spirit of blindness, blind obedience is all that is possible. I pray that soon the eye scales will fall off and that sight will be restored to the whole of the children of Israel. Then these mysteries will be clearly understood, and our obedience will be filled with zeal.

SHAVUA TOV!

¹ The Normal Christian Life, Watchman Nee, Tyndale House Publishers, Fort Washington PA, Pg. 11

² American Dictionary of the English Language 1825, Noah Webster, Foundation for Christian Education, Pg. 21

³ Webster's New Twentieth Century Dictionary, Unabridged, Second Edition, Simon and Schuster, Pg. 1829

⁴ Ryrie Study Bible Expanded Edition King James Version, Moody Press, Pg. 571

⁵ Ryrie Study Bible Expanded Edition King James Version, Moody Press, Pg. 593

⁶ John 4:23

⁷ The Pentateuch, Samson Raphael Hirsch, Judaica Press, Pg. 587

⁸ Ibid

⁹ *Cohanim* is the Hebrew word for "Priests."

¹⁰ *Cohen Gadol* is the Hebrew word for "High Priest."

¹¹ JPS Torah Commentary Numbers, Jacob Milgrom, Jewish Publication Society, Pg. 438

¹² Studies in Bamidbar Numbers, Nehama Leibowitz, LAMBDA Publishers Pg. 235

¹³ Leviticus 4:1ff