

The Hebrew Corner

The people of Israel that lived under the Mosaic law of the old covenant were expected by God to follow specific instructions in a variety of circumstances of their lives. One of the most detailed series of instructions concerned the preparation of the water of impurity, also known as the water of separation. This was to be prepared to be used to make a person clean who had come into contact with a dead body. The following passage records God's commandment to Moses and Aaron concerning the sacrifice providing the ashes for the water of impurity (Numbers 10:1-10):

“And the LORD spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying, this is the ordinance of the law which the LORD hath commanded saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, that they bring thee a red heifer without spot, wherein is no blemish, and upon which never came yoke: and ye shall give her unto Eleazar the priest, that he may bring her forth without the camp, and one shall slay her before his face: And Eleazar the priest shall take of her blood with his finger, and sprinkle of her blood directly before the tabernacle of the congregation seven times: And one shall burn the heifer in his sight; her skin, and her flesh, and her blood, with her dung, shall he burn: And the priest shall take cedar wood, and hyssop, and scarlet, and cast it into the midst of the burning of the heifer. Then the priest shall wash his clothes, and he shall bathe his flesh in water, and afterward he shall come into the camp, and the priest shall be unclean until the even. And he that burneth her shall wash his clothes in water, and bathe his flesh in water, and shall be unclean until the even. 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. And he that gathereth the ashes of the heifer shall wash his clothes, and be unclean until the even: and it shall be unto the children of Israel, and unto the stranger that sojourneth among them, for a statute for ever.”

The phrase translated red heifer in Hebrew is parah adumah (אֲדֹמָה פָּרָה, pah-RAH ah-doom-MAH), for which another translation is red cow. Closely related by root to adumah is the Hebrew word adam (אָדָם, ah-DAHM), which can be translated man or Adam.

Consequently the use of adumah to refer to the color of the heifer suggests a connection to the original sin of Adam. Wherein is no blemish is from the Hebrew phrase en bah moom (אֵין בַּהּ מוּם, ayn-BAH MOOM), or there is no blemish in it. As we can see, this had to be a very special young cow, that had not been put under yoke, in Hebrew, ol (עֹל, OHL). Blood (דָּם, DAHM) is always required for atonement for sin, and in this case the blood of the animal is sprinkled seven times in front of the tabernacle. The animal was to be burned, and cedar wood (עֵץ אֲרֵז, AYTS EH-rehz), hyssop, and scarlet, was to be thrown in with the burning heifer. The ashes (אֶפֶר, AY-fehr) of the heifer were to be stored outside the camp for preparation of the water of impurity, in Hebrew, me niddah (מֵי נִדְדָה, MAY nihd-DAH). This preparation is described in Numbers 19:14-19:

“This is the law, when a man dieth in a tent: all that come into the tent, and all that is in the tent, shall be unclean seven days. And every open vessel, which hath no covering bound upon it, is unclean. 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. And 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: And 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: And 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.”

Here the clean person (אִישׁ טָהוֹר, EESH tah-HOHR) is to sprinkle the water of impurity on the unclean (טָמֵא, tah-MAY) on the first, third, and seventh days, then purify himself and wash his clothes and bathe. It is not clear from the specification in the Tanach what the purpose was for preparation or the application of the water of impurity in the way it was done. However, the need for such a method of purification is evident. Providing an animal sacrifice in every case when someone touched a dead body, especially during a time of war or plague, was not practical, in that large numbers of sacrificial animals would be required. By using the ashes of one sacrificial animal to provide the water of impurity, many who had become unclean could be made clean again. This points the way to the sacrifice of Yeshua, which provided a way for a multitude of people to be cleansed of sin.

The sprinkling of the heifer's blood in front of the tabernacle, as well as the throwing of scarlet fabric into the burning of the heifer, symbolizes the need for the shedding of blood as the only acceptable way to make an unclean person clean. Here is where there is evidently a strong connection between the old and new covenant (B'rit Hadasha). In the following passage (John 2:1-10), we read about Jesus our Yeshua appearing at the wedding of Cana:

“And the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee; and the mother of Jesus was there: And both Jesus was called, and his disciples, to the marriage. And when they wanted wine, the mother of Jesus saith unto him, They have no wine. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, what have I to do with thee? Mine hour is not yet come. His mother saith unto the servants, Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it. And there were set there six waterpots of stone, after the manner of the purifying of the Jews, containing two or three firkins apiece. Jesus saith unto them, Fill the waterpots with water. And they filled them up to the brim. And he saith unto them, Draw out now, and bear unto the governor of the feast. And they bare it. When the ruler of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and knew not whence it was: (but the servants which drew the water knew;) the governor of the feast called the bridegroom. And saith unto him, Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine; and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse: but thou hast kept the good wine until now.”

The waterpots of water used for purification may or may not have been the water of impurity described in the Numbers passage, However, what is clear is that Jesus turning the water into wine was not simply an act of hospitality to the wedding guests. What is the evident symbolism here is the purifying water representing the old covenant, being replaced in an instant by the wine representing the new covenant, a covenant of blood from the perfect sacrifice, Jesus our Yeshua himself.

May you continue to live an abundant life in Yeshua, provided by his willingness to sacrifice his own life for you.