

CHUKKAT { חֻקַּת } (Statute, Decree or Ordinance)

Numbers 19:1-22:1, Judges 11:1- 33, Hebrews 9:13,
John 3:10-21, 3:14-36, 12:32

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“This is the statute (Chukkat) of the law (Torah) which the Lord has commanded. ‘Tell the Israelites to procure for you a red heifer that is free from every blemish and defect and on which no yoke has ever been laid.’ ” (Numbers 19:2)

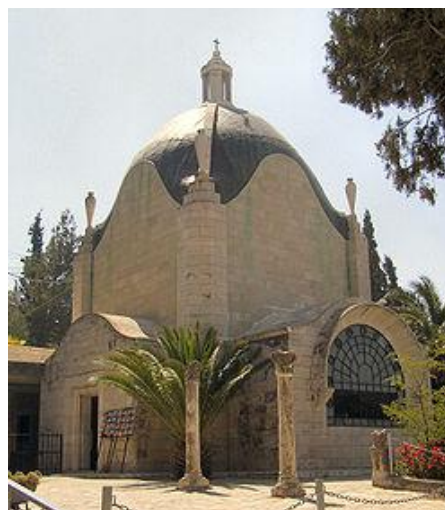
This week’s Torah study from Parashat Chukkat (meaning decree, statute, or ordinance) deals with the ritual laws of the Red Heifer (פָּרֵה אֲדֻמָּה, *parah adumah*). This heifer (a cow that has not yet borne a calf) needed to be without any kind of blemish or defect and must never have borne a yoke. It would be slaughtered under the supervision of the Jewish Priest (Cohen), who would sprinkle its blood seven times toward the Tabernacle. The cow would then be burned outside the camp and its ashes used to create the waters of purification.



Red Angus Heifer (Photo Wikipedia)

It may be interesting to note that the place where the Red Heifer was burnt in biblical times was on the Mount of Olives where the Dominus Fleuit Church [translated from Latin as ‘The Lord Wept’] is located today.

This Roman Catholic Church was constructed between 1953 and 1955 by the Italian architect Antonio Barluzzi in the shape of a teardrop to symbolize the tears of the Messiah. It is believed to be at this site that Yeshua, while riding toward the city of Jerusalem, wept over that which He knew would soon befall His people : the destruction of Jerusalem and the Second Temple; as well as the exile of the Jews.¹



Dominus Fleuit Church

¹ Luke 19:37-44

From Tamei to Tahor

The waters of purification were necessary to cleanse those who had been defiled by a human corpse, bones or grave before they could enter the Tabernacle. In Hebrew, the concepts of ‘clean’ and ‘unclean’ or ‘pure’ (tahor) and impure (tamei) are akin to and insider and an outsider. Only those who were tahor (clean/pure) could enter the dwelling place of God’s presence.

Those who were deemed tamei (unclean/defiled) would be kept outside and, if not purified, would be cut off from Israel - like lepers. How would an Israelite become impure? Tumah (impurity) could be contracted in several ways such as through contact with dead bodies, bodily secretions such as menstrual blood, fluids after childbirth or semen from ejaculation.

In addition to the ashes of the Red Heifer that would be required for the waters of purification, three other elements were added: hyssop, cedar wood, and scarlet thread. Why these elements? It is because they were all used in the building of the sanctuary: the hyssop was used by the priests for sprinkling the blood; the cedar wood was used for the posts, and the scarlet thread was used in construction of the curtains.

Therefore, in mixing the sacred with the death of the heifer, death and life would be combined to bring forth cleansing and purification which would allow the person to cross the bridge from tamei back into tahor.



hyssop (1885 painting by Otto Wilhelm Thomé)

Looking for a ‘Needle in a Haystack’

‘Chukkat’ are ordinances of God that He has commanded; and for which he gives us no rational explanation. It is somewhat like a father who says to his son, “*You must do this only because I said so...*” So it is with the laws of purification through the Red Heifer. The early Jewish explanation for this mysterious sacrifice is that it was meant to atone for the sin of the Golden Calf.

Because the state of ritual purity obtained through the ashes of a Red Heifer is a necessary prerequisite for participating in any Temple service, efforts have been made in modern times by Jews wanting to rebuild the Temple to locate a red heifer and recreate the ritual. However, multiple candidates have been disqualified over the years.

As recently as June 2014, the elusive ‘Red Heifer’ was believed to have been found in the United States of America (on the very same week as this parashah was read); but alas it was also eventually disqualified. This Red Heifer is such an extremely rare creature that searching for it is considered like looking for a ‘needle in a haystack’.

Apparently (according to rabbinic thought) there have only been nine red cows ever found that met the stringent Biblical criteria from the time of the giving of the commandment to the destruction of the Second Temple (first century AD).



Why is it be nearly impossible to find this ‘parah adumah’ ? Besides being without blemish or defect, the Red Heifer also needed to be less than four years old and completely reddish in color. If even two hairs of a different color are found, that cow is disqualified, such as also happened in 2000 when the hoped for cow was found to have two black hairs!

The Jewish rules regarding the Red Heifer also require that the cow be kept under strict care until it reaches the age of three. It needed to be a ‘virgin’ animal – that is, never having been used for secular purposes. It could not ever have been ridden (can one ride a cow?), borne a yoke or put to work.

If anyone even leaned on the cow or put a piece of cloth on its back this would also disqualify the candidate. Oye!

If the perfect Red Heifer is so difficult to find, why do some Jewish people continue to search for it so diligently? Those working with the Temple Institute in Jerusalem, who are making preparations for the construction of the Third Temple, know that unless the priests they are now training can undergo the required cleaning in this sacred ceremony with the ashes of the Red Heifer, they will not be able to enter even the courtyards of the Temple, let alone the inner sanctuary.

In other words, Jewish worship at the Temple Mount is impossible without the discovery of this elusive Red Heifer. Many Jews believe that Moses discovered the first Red Heifer; but it will be the Messiah who prepares the last one.

According to the Mishna (Book of Rabbinic Commentary), the ceremonial burning of a Red Heifer was enacted only seven times in history: once by Moses, once by Ezra, and five times after Ezra. It disappeared from Jewish life with the destruction of the Temple.

So what may we now use to cleanse us from defilement?

The Mystery of the Red Heifer Revealed in the Messiah

The laws regarding the Red Heifer seem a mystery – how can the ashes of a red heifer possibly cleanse a person from defilement? This makes no sense (like many concepts in the Torah) without knowing Yeshua.

When we look ahead to the Messiah's atoning sacrifice, we can better understand this portion of Scripture. We know that Yeshua the Messiah was declared 'faultless' and 'without blemish'. Through the Messiah, we may be cleansed from all defilement - not with the blood of a red heifer, nor the blood of bulls and goats - but with a more perfect sacrifice. We not only receive cleansing from the defilement of this world, but also eternal redemption through the precious blood of Yeshua.

“He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption.

The blood of goats and bulls and the ASHES OF A HEIFER sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean.

How much more, then, will the blood of the Messiah, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!” (Hebrews 9:13-14)

Very few Jewish people understand the necessity of a blood sacrifice for the forgiveness of sins; therefore it is difficult for a Jewish person to understand what Yeshua has done for us. Blood sacrifice has always been used to cleanse us and atone for our sins; it is God's way – as it is written in the Scriptures:

“For the life of a creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you to make atonement for yourselves on the altar; it is the blood that makes atonement for one's life.” (Leviticus 17:11)

This aspect of God's requirements of man has been downplayed (if not intentionally hidden) from the Jewish people of today by Rabbinical Judaism. Since the Holy Temple no longer exists to offer up the animal sacrifices we can no longer fulfill this 'mitzvah' (commandment).

However, the endless sacrifices that the Cohen Hagadol (high priest) performed in biblical times was but a foreshadow of the sacrifice that Yeshua would make, once and for all, of his own sinless, unblemished life.

“But only the high priest entered the inner room, and that only once a year, (Yom Kippur) AND NEVER WITHOUT BLOOD, which he offered for himself and for the sins the people had committed in ignorance.” (Hebrews 9:7)

In the [Book of Daniel](#) we also find a possible reference to the Red Heifer when God tells Daniel that in the last days, "**many shall be purified and made white.**"² Isaiah also prophesied, "**Though your sins be crimson like scarlet, they shall be white as snow.**" (Isaiah 1:18)

² Daniel 12:10

No matter the seriousness of our sins, or the extent of our defilement, these will all be washed away in the cleansing blood of the Messiah, Yeshua; and we will stand before God in pure, white robes of righteousness.

Temple Mount Faithful

A Jewish group by the name of Temple Mount Faithful (considered a ‘fringe element’ by many Jews) re-enacts a ritual blood sacrifice of a lamb in an annual pre-Passover ritual.³

Cohanim (Jewish priests) dress in authentic attire and the Levites sing Tehillim (Psalms) as the ancient biblical ceremony is re-enacted to the letter: the lamb is slaughtered and skinned; its blood spilled and organs burned on the specially constructed altar; and the choicest pieces of its meat are offered up to the Kohanim.



Accompanying the procession this year (on April 1st, 2015) was Rabbi Yehudah Glick (in photo on the right), who miraculously survived an assassination attempt by an Arab terrorist only six months prior.

At the event, Rabbi Glick said, *"Five months ago, the doctors didn't give me more than a two to five percent chance of surviving,"*

"My children came to the hospital to say goodbye to me. I wish I could offer up a sacrifice to express my gratitude, but we can't do so today. Who knows, perhaps we will be able to soon."



³ <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4643453,00.html>

Thirty Eight Years of Silence

The 20th chapter of the Book of Numbers occurs in the 40th year of the Israelites' wandering in the wilderness. In the previous parashah, (Korach), the Israelites had been condemned to wander for 40 years in the wilderness until the entire generation died there. Only two – Joshua and Calev, would survive to enter the Promised Land with the new generation of Israelites who had not known slavery.

Parashat Korach also described their unauthorized attempt to enter the Land of Canaan which proved to be unsuccessful, as God was not 'with them' in this battle. So we are left with 38 years of silence - thirty eight years of apparently uneventful, aimless, purposeless wandering in a wilderness wasteland until all except two men died – their carcasses lay scattered all over the wilderness. And with most of them God was not pleased because of their lack of faith. How depressing!

And yet when we see the next generation preparing to enter the Promised Land, we may note that much spiritual growth took place in those thirty eight years. It may seem as if nothing of consequence happened - no progress worthy of mention in the Bible; but those 38 years transformed a beaten down, victimized generation of slaves into parents who raised children fit to possess the Land and to live free of slavery and the terrible victim mentality of their parents.

If we are first-generation Believers, as many Messianic Jews are, we have much to overcome. It can, at times, feel overwhelming and cause depression or self hatred. Like these Israelites, we may also look at our life's journey from a perspective of victimization, oppression and abuse and think,

“I have not made any progress; all I'm doing is wandering around the same mountain one more time, one more year and I'll probably do this until I die.”

Perhaps we have seen scant few of our desired goals reached, dreams come to pass, longings fulfilled or promises inherited. But it is possible that we are growing and changing inside - in the inner man - so that we don't pass on these traits that caused us to be enslaved to the next generation.

We are working on becoming more and more conformed into the image of Yeshua – so that our children may live free of this victim mentality, refuse to tolerate abuse, and be fit to inherit the promises. Let us not lose heart when it seems that we are not making progress in our journey. Much significant transformation occurs in hidden places.

The Death of Miriam

In the Wilderness of Zin, in the first month of the year, Miriam (Moses and Aaron's sister) died and was buried. **“Then the children of Israel, the whole congregation, came into the Wilderness of Zin in the first month, and the people stayed in Kadesh; and Miriam died there and was buried there.”** (Numbers 20:1)

The last time we heard of Miriam, she had been stricken with tzara'at (leprosy) as a punishment for speaking against Moses' choice of a Cushite wife. She became tamei (defiled/impure) and was exiled from the camp for a period of seven days until God healed her at the pleading of Moses.

Miriam was the one who carefully watched over baby Moses as he floated down the Nile River in a basket; and ran to get her mother for a wet nurse after the Pharaoh's daughter rescued him.



Miriam led the procession of women singing, dancing, and rejoicing with tambourines after God safely led them through on dry land; while later allowing the Egyptians army to drown in the waters of the Red Sea (just as they drowned the Hebrew male babies in the waters of the Nile).



Miriam watching over infant Moses

"And Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand; and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances." (Exodus 15:20). Illuminated manuscript, [Tomić Psalter](#), 1360/63, Moscow State Historical Museum

Although Miriam was considered a leader and prophetess, her death is mentioned only briefly in the Scriptures, with no note of the usual mourning period. Rabbinic commentary suggests that Moses and Aaron buried her in the middle of the night (*Yalkut Shimoni Mas'ei* 787).

Why the strange silence over Miriam's death? It seems that although she was physically healed, this worshipper – priestess of Israel remained tamei even unto her death. After Miriam's death, however, the people thirsted for water and complained:

“Why did you bring us up out of Egypt to bring us to this terrible place, a seedless place without a fig or a vine or a pomegranate, without even water to drink?” (Numbers 20:5)



Miriam the Prophetess

The vine may represent a fruitful woman in her home: **“Your wife shall be a fruitful vine inside your house.”** (Psalm 128:3)

Therefore, some biblical commentators believe that the people who complained were still mourning the loss of Miriam, for whom they had not been given sufficient opportunity to grieve.

Water from a Rock

“And the people contended with Moses and spoke, saying: “If only we had died when our brethren died before the LORD! Why have you brought up the assembly of the LORD into this wilderness, that we and our animals should die here?” (Numbers 20:3-4)

Moses responded in anger, saying, **“Listen, you rebels, shall we get water for you out of this rock?”** (Numbers 20:10)

The Hebrew word for rebels (morim מורים) is spelled with the exact same letters as the name Miriam מרים. Perhaps Moses was still hurting over the recent death of his sister.



Moses Striking Water from the Rock (painting circa 1633–1635 by Nicolas Poussin)

For whatever reasons, Moses finally lost his characteristic cool. Instead of speaking to the rock as God had instructed, Moses struck the rock twice and water gushed out giving the wretched people their water to drink.

Moses simply became fed up with this unruly band of ex-slaves who constantly complained and appeared blinded to their blessings. So Moses substituted force for faith; therefore God said he would not be allowed to bring the congregation of Israel into the land. This one moment of rage resulting from sheer exasperation and frustration led to the death of his life's dream - to bring his people into the Promised Land.

“Then the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, “Because you did not believe Me, to hallow Me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land which I have given them.” (Numbers 20:12)

Tzur Yisrael (Rock of Israel)



Moses Smites the Rock in the Desert (watercolor circa 1896–1902 by James Tissot)

Why did Moses receive such a harsh punishment from God for striking the rock rather than just speaking to it as God had commanded? Surely this was not such a terrible deviation from God's instructions that it justified his exclusion from entering the Promised Land?

After everything Moses had endured from this unruly mixed multitude of former slaves, shouldn't he have been allowed a bit of slack? (Wow – I lose my cool at times just over my teenager leaving the bathroom a mess!) ☺

This issue of Moses' seemingly harsh punishment always troubled me, until I saw a picture of the living water gushing forth from the '*Rock of our Salvation*'. Moses did not just lose patience with the people; but by striking the rock (tzur), he dishonored God in their sight, knowing that one of the names of God is 'Tzur Yisrael' (Rock of Israel).

The Lord is called our 'Rock' (tzur):

“The God who is my rock צורִי, in Him I take refuge; my shield, and my horn of salvation, my high tower, and my refuge; my savior, You save me from violence.” (2 Samuel 22:3)

Yeshua is the 'cornerstone' of our faith, that which the people have rejected. **“The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone;”** (Psalm 118:22).

The ancient Hebrew prophet, Isaiah, tells us that whoever trusts in this precious cornerstone will never be dismayed or ashamed.

“See, I lay a stone in Zion, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone for a sure foundation; the one who trusts will never be dismayed.”(Isaiah 28:16)

Yeshua is called the 'living Stone'.

“As you come to him, the living Stone – rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him...See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trust in him will never be put to shame.” (1Peter 2:4-6)

Why is Yeshua called the living Stone? From this rock gushes forth water from which we may freely drink. This living water becomes a stream that gushes within us, welling up to eternal life.

The Foundation Stone in the floor of the [Dome of the Rock](#) shrine in [Jerusalem](#). The round hole at upper left penetrates to a small cave, known as the [Well of Souls](#), below. The cage-like structure just beyond the hole covers the stairway entrance to the cave (south is towards the top of the image).



When Yeshua met a Samaritan woman at the well, he said to her, **“Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”**(John 4:13-14)

It was to this Samaritan woman that Yeshua boldly declared himself to be the Messiah who brings living water to Mankind. Not understanding Yeshua's words about salvation and worship and the Spirit, she dismissed him with a commonly heard expression today.

“When Mashiach (the Messiah) comes, He will explain everything to us.” Yeshua declared, **“I who speak to you am He.”**(John 4:25-26)

Yeshua makes another reference to the living water on the last day of the Feast of Sukkot (Tabernacles). **“If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him.”**

By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive.”
(John 7:37-39)

Life without this living water is indeed a dry and thirsty existence. There is no comparison to living a life satisfied and refreshed by the Spirit of God. This is available to anyone who will ask and believe in faith. It is a free gift from God to us. I invite you to join with those who believe in this living Stone; to drink of the living water that flows from Him and to receive salvation in Yeshua.

“With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.”(Isaiah 12:3)

Streams on Dry Ground

God promises, with references to streams of water, that He will pour out His Spirit one day upon the land and the people of Israel. **“For I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour out my Spirit on your offspring, and my blessing on your descendants.”**
(Isaiah 44:3)



Today, we can see the effects of inventive irrigation systems upon the land of Israel. The desert is truly blooming as a rose and portions of the once barren land resemble the Garden of Eden, exactly as God promised. Because of His faithfulness, we can rest assured that God will also fulfill His promise to pour out His Spirit upon the people. Let us join in praying for the will of the Father to be done in the land and people of Israel.

Although this life-giving drink is freely available, it is by asking that we receive, not by demanding. We must appreciate this precious cornerstone – treat it with honor (kavod) and reverence, not ‘strike’ it to produce according to our demands. The Spirit of God is grieved by this kind of demanding, controlling attitude.

The Dangers of Strife

“This was the water of Meribah מְרִיבָה (quarrel), because the children of Israel contended (quarrelled) רָבוּ with the LORD, and He was hallowed among them.”
(Numbers 19:13)

Because of the strife that occurred at this place, the name of the water was called Meribah מְרִיבָה from the words ‘riv’ רִיב (which means to argue, bicker, strive or contend) and mar מַר which mean ‘bitter’. Bitterness and unforgiveness produce a quarrelsome, contentious character.

Take note - single men – the Bible warns that it is better to live on the corner of a rooftop or in the middle of the wilderness than in a home (even a luxurious one) with an angry, quarrelsome, contentious woman. ⁴ (ouch!) ☺

The Torah has so much to say about the dangers of strife. “**Better is a dry morsel with quietness than a house full of feasting with strife (רִיב).**” (Proverbs 17:1)

How many great family meals have been ruined because of strife at the table? I’d rather eat a small salad in peace than a roast beef feast with arguing. We must avoid strife like the plague! This is not always easy when the people around us seem to love to argue and bicker. “**He who loves transgression loves strife.**” (Proverbs 17:19) Just saying.....

Fools love to quarrel but wisdom pursues peace. “**The beginning of strife is like releasing water; therefore stop contention before a quarrel starts.**” (Proverbs 17:14)

This word, Meribah, can be read Meri-bah, which means ‘miri is in it’. Miriam’s name can be read ‘Miri – yam’ (meaning ‘Miri of the sea’). Therefore, this woman of the water, even after her death, flowed (like the waters of purification) out of the rock to give drink to her people.

How may we move from being a rejected ‘outsider’ to becoming an accepted ‘insider’? How may we be transformed from *tamei* to *tahor*? It is only through the blood of Yeshua the Messiah that we, who were once far away from God and separated from Him because of our sins, can now come boldly to His throne and find intimate relationship with our Heavenly Father.

May we become healers, allowing rivers of living water to flow freely out of our inner being to help bring people back into a restored relationship with Adonai through the purification we experience in Yeshua Hamashiach.

Reacting or Responding?

We can learn so many valuable lessons from the experiences of the Israelites in the wilderness in these Scriptures. When the congregation of Israel again complained about lack of water, they wished that they had died with the others who perished before the Lord (Korach, Datan, Aviram and the other rebels) rather than face the prospect of dying of thirst in the wilderness.

It seems that they still had not learned their lessons. Rather than speaking words of faith and hope, they prophesied the worst possible outcome: “**we’re all going to die here – we and our cattle...**” (Numbers 20:4)

We too can fall into this same trap of failing to learn from our mistakes and the destructive example of others. We also can continue to ‘*react*’ out of emotional habit, rather than ‘*respond*’ in a righteous way to the challenges we face in life.

⁴ Proverbs 21:9, Proverbs 25:24

I found out the hard way that I am allergic to penicillin. Several years ago, when treated for an infection, I ‘reacted’ with a full body rash and shortness of breath. However someone else with a serious infection may ‘respond’ to the antibiotic and get well.

There exists a crucial difference between ‘reacting’ and ‘responding’. Usually, our first reactions are ‘in the flesh’ but if we can take a moment to regain our balance, and respond out of a place of peace, we will usually be spirit- led, and therefore achieve much better results.

The Israelites ‘strove’ with Moses, blaming him for taking them out of Egypt and for bringing them into what they called “this evil place”. They accused Moses of failing to fulfill his promises to bring them into a better place – a place flowing with milk and honey. They had heard of the promises of figs, grape vines, and pomegranates – all symbols of abundance – but they did not yet see it with their eyes. What they ‘saw’ did not match with their ‘vision’.

They said, **“And wherefore have you made us to come up out of Egypt, to bring us unto this evil place? It is no place of seed, or of figs, or of vines, or of pomegranates; neither is there any water to drink.”** (Numbers 20:5)

By Patience and Faith

In their spiritual immaturity, they lacked the patience and faith to see the promises truly come to pass in their lives. We are to imitate Abraham who, by patience and faith, inherited the promises! **“We do not want you to become lazy, but to imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised.”** (Hebrews 6:12)

This is the requirement of faith – that we continue to hope in confidence for those things that we do not yet see⁵. We are to live by faith and not by sight.⁶ Just because we don’t see something yet with our eyes, doesn’t mean it’s not on its way – IF we will have patience to wait with an attitude of faith and a positive expectancy.

It’s easy to lose heart when we don’t see God’s promises come to pass in our lives. We have heard of the Promised Land; we know that Yeshua came to give us life and life more abundantly; but perhaps we have yet to see these promises fulfilled in our lives.

This doesn’t mean that Yeshua has failed us or let us down. It means that we need to continue to wait with patience, keep confessing the Word of God; and to press on in faith, hope and love. It doesn’t matter if it has taken a long time. God’s promises are true and they will come to pass in our lives – IF we will stay in an attitude of faith. This calls for spiritual maturity.

We can learn lessons from the Israelites and be careful not to charge Yeshua with wrong if we feel the promises are slow in coming.

⁵ Hebrews 11:1

⁶ 2 Corinthians 5:7

It's not my Fault

What other lesson can we learn from the Israelites? In their immaturity, they refused to take responsibility for the part they had played in their own destruction. The hard reality is that it was their own bad attitudes, negative words and lack of trust in God that had caused them to become 'stuck' in this place of scarcity and desperation.

They kept speaking the worst of their fears and God gave them what they spoke. May it be possible that we do the same? Could it be that the answer to our current difficulties can be found 'right under our nose'?" The Word of God tells us that we possess the power of life or death in our tongue – by the words we speak –of either faith or fear.

“A man’s stomach shall be satisfied from the fruit of his mouth; from the produce of his lips he shall be filled. Death and life are in the power of the tongue, And those who love it will eat its fruit.” (Proverbs 18:20-21)

In response to their complaints, Moses and Aaron left the assembly and fell on their faces before the Lord to plead for the people. Perhaps rather than continuing to strive with negative, complaining people, we should turn to the Lord in prayer. I personally, have a real problem with this issue. I really can't stand listening to what we call in Yiddish, "kvetchers" – people who continually complain about everything.

I tend to become either angry with them, giving them my all too familiar (even if always ignored) lecture on why we shouldn't complain; or I walk away and ignore the problem person. Neither of these approaches seems highly effective. Perhaps Moses and Aaron give us the key here – we need to fall on our faces before the Lord and plead for mercy.

Honor and Glory

When they humbled themselves before the Lord, His glory appeared to them: "... **and the glory of the Lord appeared to them.**" (Numbers 20:6)

The glory of God in Hebrew is '*kavod*'. This comes from the word '*kaved*', which means 'weighty or heavy'. The glory of the Lord is 'weighty' - a felt presence. When the glory (*kavod*) of God filled the Tabernacle, the priests could not even continue to stand .

Kavod is also the Hebrew word used for 'honor', as in 'Honor your mother and father'. When we honor someone, we don't brush them off lightly, as if they are inconsequential or insignificant. Honor means we are to treat this person as someone of precious substance, of great value, worthy of deep respect and preferential treatment.

Forget the Former Things...

Another prevailing sin of the Israelites was their inability to keep a forward, hopeful, trusting, faith-filled focus. Every time a challenge presented itself to them, they looked back to the past. We all have a past to look back at. When God brings us out of something we must resist the temptation to want to go back into it when things get hard.

Paul exhorted us to **‘forget the things that lie behind and press on to the future...’** (Philippians 3:12-14).

We are so prone to dwell on the past instead of staying forward focused. We need to speak this word to ourselves often – *“I do not look to the past, to where I have been but forward in faith, hope and trust to the glorious future that God has planned for me.”*⁷ Can we truly believe that God has a good plan for our lives? Yes we can.

Believe me, I need this word just as much, if not more so, than you do. I left behind an oppressive situation in Canada, but also all my beloved family. God made a way where there was no way in order to bring me and my children back to the Land of Israel. I came with His promises to plant us securely in this land, never to be uprooted again from the Land He has given us.⁸

I clutched in my hand God’s promises to gather us back to the Land and to bless us here, give us double for our former shame; that we would rejoice in our inheritance.⁹ I carried in my heart His Word that He would feed us in rich pastures on the mountains of Israel, that we would increase and be fruitful¹⁰; that God would restore health and healing, turn our mourning into joy; that we would eat and be satisfied, dwell securely without fear from our enemies, and not be in want.¹¹

But it is in times of scarcity, the times when my eyes did not yet see the fulfillment of His promises coming to pass in my life, that my faith was sometimes sorely tested. It was when I was searching the children’s change purses for a coin for bus fare to school, putting my bread and milk on credit at the makolet (little grocery store); it was when squeezing my son’s feet into too small shoes and being unable to take my dog, Pepper, to the vet when he was ill - all because of lack - that I was tempted to think,

“Maybe I’m not going to make it here... Maybe I made a mistake in coming. .. Maybe God is not really going to come through for us. Maybe it will always be this way....or maybe it will even get worse! Maybe I should just go back....”

Thank God those times of extreme financial hardship are behind us; but there are still challenges that cause those negative thoughts to return. It is when I am feeling weary, overwhelmed and lonely and have pain in my body; when sirens go off all over the country, warning us that we need to be prepared for enemy attack; or we hear of another brutal terrorist attack that I sometimes still just want to ‘go home’. Even though this is now ‘home’, a part of me (when under pressure) just wants to go back to what was once familiar, instead of looking ahead with hope and a positive, faith-filled expectancy.

This is the way the carnal mind of the flesh thinks, and I am just as prone as anyone else to fall into this kind of fearful, negative thinking. That is why we need to stay in the

⁷ Jeremiah 29:11

⁸ Jeremiah 32:41

⁹ Isaiah 61:7

¹⁰ Jeremiah 23:3

¹¹ Jeremiah 31:10-14

Word, studying it together, encouraging one another to press on in faith and never give up or surrender to the voices of fear and doubt!

Who is Edom ?? (And why do we need to know?)

We follow along in the parashah and come to the portion where Edom refused to allow the Israelites to pass through their territory on foot, therefore Israel turned away from them. We must understand who Edom is. The Edomites are the descendants of Esau, also called Adom (which means 'red' in Hebrew, because Esau was born red and hairy).

“So Esau dwelt in Mount Seir. Esau is Edom.”(Genesis 36:8)

Esau, the brother of Jacob, is one of the ancestors of today's Arabic people. Just as Esau harbored hatred for his brother, Jacob, many of the Arabic nations today are against Israel and the Jewish people. The Word of God contains many as yet unfulfilled prophecies against Edom for its hatred of Israel.

In the 35th chapter of Ezekiel, the Lord tells Edom that He is against them because...

- * They hated Israel since ancient times (v. 5)
- They shed the blood of Israel (v.5)
- They want Israel's land (v.10)
- They spoke blasphemies (v.12)
- They boasted against the Lord (v.13)

Edom's refusal to let Israel pass innocently through their land contains relevance for us and helps us understand the volatile situation in the Middle East today. Thousands of years after the incident in this parashah, the nations of Edom, Ammon, and Moab, (three ancient ancestors of the Arabic people) still despise Israel.

The ancient hatred spoken of by God has continued to this very day. This hatred is taught to children in official Ministry of Education materials in Jordan, Syria, Egypt, and other Arabic countries. Children's programming on television entices these little ones to aspirations of killing Jews.



Whereas any North American child may say they want to be a singer, a doctor, or an astronaut when they grow up, an Arabic child, due to this Satanic indoctrination, when asked the question, “What do you want to be when you grow up?” may answer, ‘ A suicide bomber’.

Many sincere Christians feel sympathetic towards the plight of the Palestinian people in Israel, but we do no favors towards the Palestinians in their quest to establish a Palestinian state on Israel’s land, and thereby ensure their destruction by God. We should not encourage Arabic people to oppose the will and purposes of God.

Many do not have the Bible and therefore have no idea the danger they are in by continuing in their struggle against Israel and the Jews and by striving to take possession of Israel’s land.

God says in the small prophetic book of Obadiah, **“Will I not destroy the wise men of Edom, men of understanding in the mountains of Esau?...Because of the violence against your brother Jacob, you will be covered with shame; you will be destroyed forever.”** (Obadiah 1:8-10)

It is our responsibility to warn these people of the Truth; not assist them in their cursing of Israel. We must beware of holding a grudge against others since it can become a generational stronghold that can bring destruction. The Torah warns us not to hold a grudge against anyone.

Death of Aaron

Not only did Moses lose his sister (who died on the 10th of Nisan); but he also lost his brother, Aaron, four months later (on the 1st of Av). All three siblings died in the same year, with Moses dying on the following 7th of Adar.

They went up to Mount Hor and there, Moses was instructed to strip Aaron of his priestly garments and place them upon his son, Eleazer, for because of Moses’ sin at the waters of Meribah, Aaron also would not live to enter the Promised Land.



The Death of Aaron (watercolor circa 1896–1902 by James Tissot)

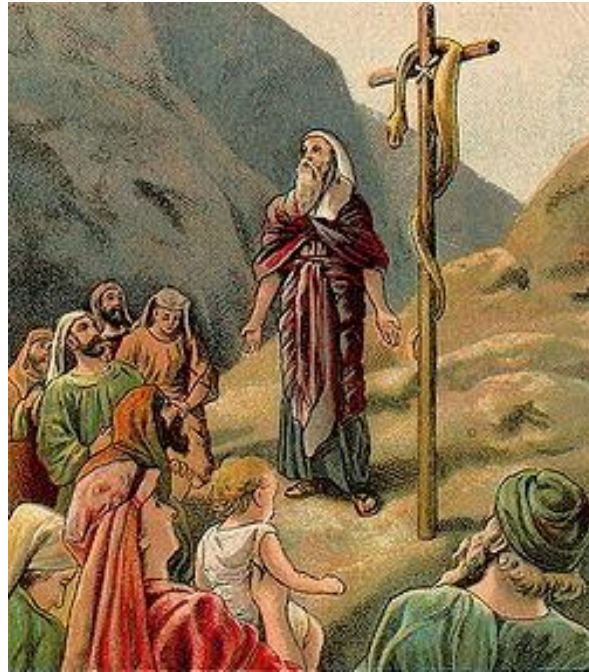
In contrast to Miriam, the congregation of Israel mourned for Aaron for thirty days.

“Now when all the congregation saw that Aaron was dead, all the house of Israel mourned for Aaron thirty days.” (Numbers 20:29)

The Bronze Serpent - Nehushtan

The strange account of the bronze serpent, called the **Nehushtan** (Hebrew: נְחֻשְׁתָּן), is another example of how incidents in the Tanach (Old Testament) may be incomprehensible and even bizarre without a prophetic understanding of the Messiah and the New Covenant.

The Israelites, having had to travel around Edom (instead of taking the shortcut through their territory) grew impatient along the way. They spoke against God and Moses by complaining once again. They complained about the lack of water, the lack of food, and even the taste of the manna God had provided for their sustenance in the wilderness.



The Brazen Serpent (illustration from a Bible card published 1907 by Providence Lithograph Company)

To complain is a common human tendency, but it reveals a doubting, ungrateful heart towards God. Not only do we express our doubts in God's ability to provide for our needs, we also show a terrible lack of appreciation for what He has already graciously provided for us when we gripe and complain in this manner.

Upon coming to the Land, after a brief initial stay at a friend's apartment in Netanya (by her generosity and grace), our family wandered for six months in the land of Israel before finally finding a place to settle. Since apartments in Israel do not come with basic appliances, for the first while, we did not even have a fridge or washing machine (dryers are considered luxuries).

We washed all our clothes by hand in the shower and hung them all out to dry. Apartments generally come with four bare walls and no closets also so all our clothes were thrown into boxes or suitcases. Now we can laugh about it, but at the time, I was often tempted to complain.

We eventually came to truly appreciate these basic things that we had formerly taken for granted in Canada. These are not our right, but are wonderful blessings from a generous Heavenly Father who truly cares for the needs of His children. Even modern conveniences like indoor toilets, electricity, and clean water that runs out of a tap are luxuries to which many people in the world don't have access.

Instead of complaining over what we don't have, we need to be incredibly grateful over every little thing God has blessed us with.

God's punishment upon the people for their complaining (again) fell both swiftly and severely. The Lord sent venomous snakes that bit the people and many of them died. The people realized their sin against the Lord and Moses and pleaded for mercy; so Moses prayed for the people.

This is what the Lord replied to Moses,

“Make a snake and put it up on a pole; anyone who is bitten can look at it and live. So Moses make a bronze snake and put it up on a pole. Then when anyone was bitten by a snake and looked at the bronze snake, he lived.” (Numbers 21:8-9)

Using a bronze snake, at first glance, surely seems a strange method of healing indeed! How can a bronze snake, lifted up on a pole, heal people from the venom of the snake when they look at it? For the answer, we need to look into the New Covenant. Who, in fact, represents the snake? Throughout the Bible, the snake or serpent represents satan, the enemy of our souls.



The Brazen Serpent (watercolor circa 1896–1902 by James Tissot)

Even in the Garden of Eden this fallen angel tempted Eve to sin against the Lord. Since this time, we have all been bitten and infected by the venom of this snake – we all have the inborn tendency to sin. It is this sin which separates us from God, since sin cannot dwell in His holy presence. Because of the serpent's bite, we are all destined to die, eternally separated from God.

“But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden His face from you so that He will not hear.” (Isaiah 59:2)

The blood of bulls and goats could temporarily atone for our sins under the Old Covenant, but God planned an even better covenant, by which all peoples could find forgiveness of sin. Through the Messiah, Yeshua, lifted upon a pole, we may be healed and therefore not die but live.

“Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life.” (John 3:14)

How did God solve this problem of sin, the serpent's fatal venom? He sent His Son:

“For God so loved the world that He gave his one and only son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.” (John 3:16)

“Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God’s wrath remains on him.” (John 3:36)

Yeshua knew that in his death, he would be lifted up that all men could come to him for spiritual cleaning and healing.

“But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself. He said this to show the kind of death he was going to die.” (John 12:32).

Just as whoever looked to the bronze snake lifted up on the pole in the wilderness would live and not die, so will we live forever when we look to Yeshua lifted up on the pole. He, in fact, although sinless himself, took the sin upon himself, symbolically becoming the snake, in order that we may live.



Christ on the Cross, by Carl Heinrich Bloch

“God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”(2 Corinthians 5:21)

I urge you to look to Yeshua lifted up on the cross and receive the gift of eternal life and healing that God so desperately wants you to have.

That Old Rugged Cross

The Israelites eventually changed the pole with the bronze serpent into an idolatrous object of worship. We can do the same with the cross which was Yeshua’s execution stake. Much ado is made in Christianity about the symbol of the cross, but it is, in fact, only the pole upon which the Messiah was crucified.

It would be as if the Israelites who were healed by the bronze snake would wear a pole around their necks as a symbol of their faith. If a sword, dagger, whip, or other method had been used to execute the Messiah besides the cruel, Roman method of crucifixion, would those who follow Yeshua wear these instruments of torture and death as pieces of jewelry? Hmm...

The symbol of the cross (which may in actuality have pagan roots) has been used throughout history as a symbol of hatred towards the Jewish people by agents of that serpent Satan, masquerading as Christians. As just one example, the Crusaders locked Jews in their synagogues and burned them alive while marching around with a cross singing, ‘*O Christ, we adore Thee*’.

Therefore, even sincere Christians who wear or display a ‘cross’ often cause offense to Jewish people without meaning to. Although a precious symbol to many Christians, Paul tells the Roman congregations that if anything we eat causes a brother or sister distress, then we are no longer acting in love.¹² Might this not also apply to what we wear?

I recently toured Yad Vashem, the Holocaust Museum in Jerusalem and was struck by the number of photos showing the cross used in association with this inhuman attempt to annihilate the entire population of European Jewry.

Archival photos even reveal SS Nazi soldiers wearing the cross on their uniform. Upon exiting the museum, I ran into a woman wearing a cross and was surprised that this little piece of jewelry seemed so out of place and offensive in this place.



A man with three different cross necklaces.

Many Christians are unaware of these unfortunate historical facts. The cross is so abhorrent to most Jewish people that even in mathematical equations, only a ‘half cross’ is used to indicate addition.

The important thing to remember, however, is that it is Yeshua the Messiah, not an image or a symbol, which is to be honored and revered. It is in his death that we receive forgiveness of our sins, and cleansing from all defilement. It is in his resurrection from the dead that we also have hope of overcoming the finality of death and living eternally with our God.

Conquest of the Amorites

“So Israel took all these cities, and Israel dwelt in all the cities of the Amorites, in Heshbon and in all its villages.” (Numbers 21:25)

This week’s parashah ends with the conquest of the Amorites – the only real connection between the Torah portion and the haftarah to follow.



The Conquest of the Amorites (watercolor circa 1896–1902 by James Tissot)

¹² Romans 14:15

Just as with Edom, Israel asked to pass peaceably through their territory; and just like Edom, they refused. Israel sent messengers to Sihon, King of the Amorites, asking to merely pass through without eating any of their produce or drinking any of their water; but Sihon refused their request.

Instead, he gathered together his armies and went out to battle against the Israelites; but Israel defeated them, taking possession of their territory. **“Thus Israel dwelt in the land of the Amorites.”** (Numbers 21:31)

Wow – good thing this didn’t happen today, or the whole world would cry over the poor, oppressed Amorites; and demand that Israel has to give all the land back to them! ☺

Haftarat Chukkat – A Deliverer Arises in Israel

The Haftarah this week is from the book of Judges. At this time, there existed a state of lawlessness in Israel due to their lapses into the heathenism of the nations around them. This resulted in dire calamities for Israel as God punished them for their idolatry and immorality.

For eighteen years, Israel had suffered under the cruel yoke of the Ammonites (1128 – 1110 B.C.E.) until a man named Yiftach (Jeftah in English) led Israel to victory. It is assumed that the Northern area of the Amorite kingdom had belonged formerly to Ammon – thus the connection to the previous sedrah (Torah portion).



The Return of Jephtha, by Giovanni Antonio Pellegrini

Jephthah was called a mighty warrior (gibor hayil) but his mother was a prostitute (zonah). Because of his background, he was despised by his half-brothers (sons born to his father’s wife); and they drove him out of the household.

The Torah teaches us that no matter how low or troubled our background, no matter how despised or rejected by men, we can overcome all of these challenges to become a chosen vessel of destiny to bring deliverance to our people.

Yeshua was also born to a woman who was accused of immorality and becoming pregnant by a man not her betrothed (Joseph). He was also despised and rejected by many of His own people; and yet He brought salvation to all of mankind.

“He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not.” (Isaiah 53:3)

Our background or lineage does not have to keep us from success. Many have arisen out of humble beginnings or questionable backgrounds; and have gone on to become highly successful people who accomplish great things for the good of humanity.

Me and My Big Mouth

The Hebrew name Yiftach **יפתח** means ‘He will open’. Ironically, it is by opening his mouth to utter a vow that he ended up destroying his only daughter who was the first to ‘open’ the door and come out to meet him when he returned from battle with Ammon.

Our mouth can get us into a whole heap of trouble if we’re not careful. The word warns us of this truth: **“He who guards his mouth preserves his life, but he who opens wide his lips shall have destruction.”** (Proverbs 13:3)

“A fool’s mouth is his destruction.” (Proverbs 18:7)

The half-brothers of Yiftach who had sent him away, later called him back and asked him to lead them in battle against Ammon. They struck a deal with Yiftach that if he led them in military victory, he would become the head over them.

The Spirit of God came upon Yiftach and Israel did win the battle. Yiftach should have simply gone in faith that God would be with him and give them the victory. Instead, he opened his mouth and made an unnecessary vow to God. He tried to strike up a deal with the Almighty – as if we can buy off His favor.

“If you give me the Ammonites in my hand, then whatever comes out of the door of my home to meet me when I return in peace from the Ammonites, then to God will I offer it as a sacrifice.” (Judges 11:30-31)

Yiftach did not really believe that God would just give him the victory. He thought that he needed to ‘hedge his bet’ by offering an additional sacrifice. We also sometimes try to plea bargain with God – *“If you do this for me then I will do that for you...”*; whereas God may just want to do it for us as a free gift. We may think that we have to give God something to earn our salvation, but it is a free gift of God.

The New Testament tells us of a time when a sorcerer wanted to ‘buy’ the salvation of God but Paul rebuked him, saying we can’t purchase the gifts of God.

“And when Simon saw that through the laying on of the apostles’ hands the Holy Spirit was given, he offered them money, saying, “Give me this power also, that anyone on whom I lay hands may receive the Holy Spirit.”

But Peter said to him, “Your money perish with you, because you thought that the gift of God could be purchased with money! “ (Acts 8:18-20)

We can’t bribe God!

Here's the really twisted part of the story: it was the custom at that time, for women to come out with timbrels and singing and dancing, to meet their men when they returned from a victorious battle. Therefore Yiftach's daughter was only doing what was the norm for their time and culture – she was being an honorable, loving daughter.

Given this ancient Israelite custom, it would be reasonable to guess that Yiftach should have known his daughter would come out to greet him. Or did Yiftach think it would be his wife? We can't really know. What we do know, however, is that this portion of the story is omitted from the Haftarah.



Jephthah's Daughter (engraving by Gustave Doré from the 1865 *La Sainte Bible*)

In telling the end of the story - the terrible fate of Yiftach's daughter, we are bringing to light a terrible tragedy that is usually hidden in darkness, silence and secrecy from the synagogue reading. Similarly, the atoning death of Yeshua is hidden in darkness by omitting Isaiah chapter 53 from the traditional synagogue readings. ¹³

The Word makes it clear that she was his only daughter - his one and only child. This brings to mind Isaac, who was called Abraham's only son whom God asked to sacrifice on the altar, saying, "**Take your son, your only son...**" ¹⁴

But Isaac's life was spared while Yiftach's daughter's life was not. God Himself sacrificed His son, His only son, so that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁵

Judaism abhors human and especially child sacrifice. This proves to be one of the major objections that some Jewish people have to believing in Yeshua – that God, who hates human sacrifice, would never have authorized the sacrifice of a man to atone for people's sins. But the 53rd chapter of Isaiah tells us that it 'pleased the Lord to bruise him' and that this man did indeed, die (cut off from the land of the living), sacrificed like a lamb led to the slaughter to atone for our transgressions.



Jephthah's Daughter (watercolor circa 1896–1902 by James Tissot)

¹³ In several instances crucial portions of Scripture such as Messianic prophecies and the like are omitted from the traditional Jewish readings. Here we include them.

¹⁴ Genesis 22:2

¹⁵ John 3:16

Yeshua, however, was not just an ordinary man = He was also the Son of God (fully human and fully Divine) in a way our limited minds cannot comprehend.

God sacrificed Yeshua, His one and only son, with such terrible grief that the veil was torn at the moment of his death. It was torn from the top to the bottom, from heaven to earth. Only God, the Father could have torn the veil from His place in heaven. Why? Because of the Jewish mourning custom of tearing one's garment to express terrible grief at the loss.

When Yiftach saw that it was his daughter who came out to meet him, he tore his clothes and fell to his knees, all ancient mourning customs. He said, **“Woe, my daughter,...for I have opened (patach) my mouth to God and I cannot go back.”** (Judges 11:35)]

Violence Against Women

Yiftach had condemned his own child to die at his own hands. Bat Yiftach (daughter of Yiftach) did not protest but went away for two months to be with her friends and mourn. Thus we see the female passivity – she could have run away to safety but instead she returned only to be murdered by her own father.

Makes us wonder, eh? Are we as women born to be victims or conditioned into such passivity. Why do women stay with men who abuse and mistreat them – sometimes even to their death? I don't have the full answer, but I know that God does.



The Daughter of Jephthah, by Alexandre Cabanel (1879).

In many Muslim countries, women are murdered by their husbands or fathers in a practice called ‘honor killing’ if a woman is suspected of any kind of immorality or breach of Islamic law. “In Lebanon, as many as three-quarters of all Lebanese women have suffered physical abuse at the hands of husbands or male relatives at some point in their lives. In Afghanistan, over 85% of women report domestic violence; other nations with very high rates of domestic violence and limited legal rights include Syria, Pakistan, Egypt, Morocco, Iran, Yemen and Saudi Arabia.”¹⁶

In the case of Bat Yiftach, an unnamed woman was murdered in Israel and no one came to her defense. Where were her so-called friends? Where was the community? Why did they stand by in silence while her father **“did to her as he vowed.”** (Judges 11:39)

¹⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Women_in_Islam

Why is this tragedy hidden from us in the synagogue? Is it too disturbing? How many more anonymous women are killed while the community stands by in silence? Their deaths are hidden from the public, but we must not stand by in silence – we must speak up against violence against women.

All Vows – Kol Nidre

Why did Yiftach make such a dangerous vow? And why did he keep it? The rabbis join in condemning Yiftach's vow; they agree that he should have annulled his vow. Yom Kippur (the day of Atonement) always begins with a famous service called Kol Nidre – All vows. It is an annulment of vows made during the past year that we may be unable to keep. I have heard that it came out of Spain when so many Jewish people were forced to 'convert' to Christianity or face death. Some of the Jews chose to take the vow publicly but in their hearts, they remained Jewish. Kol Nidre gave them opportunity to repudiate their vow.

A thousand years later after the story of Yiftach and his daughter, Dante wrote: 'Be strong to keep your vow; yet be not perverse – As Yifatch once, blindly to execute a rash resolve. Better a man should say, "I have done wrong, ", Than keeping an ill vow, he should do worse.'

We may, at times, make a rash vow that later proves to be a mistake, even a disaster. Better to humble ourselves and admit we have made a terrible mistake than to go on to keep the vow and be destroyed or destroy others.

"If you have shaken hands in pledge (vow) for a stranger, you are snared by the words of your mouth;... deliver yourself; for you have come into the hand of your friend; go and humble yourself, pleased with your friend give no sleep to your eyes nor slumber to your eyelids. Deliver yourself like a gazelle from the hand of the hunter and like a bird from the hand of the fowler." (Proverbs 6:1-5)

This verse applies to the danger of co-signing for another person's debt but can be applied to other situations as well where we have made an unwise promise. I heard a testimony of a woman married to a man who actually tried to destroy her (they found arsenic in her juice). A counselor advised her that sometimes in a difficult marriage, God will tell us to stay; sometimes He will tell us to leave; and sometimes He will tell us to run as fast as we can without even grabbing a coat! She chose to run without a coat.

Surely we should do everything in our power to keep our word – Yeshua said to see that our yes be yes and our no be no. But may we also have the wisdom and grace to be released from any rash vows we have made that we should have never made in the first place.

Both Abraham and Yiftach were willing to sacrifice their only child to prove their loyalty to God. The same word is used - yechid (m) and yechidah (f). May we remember that

God sacrificed His only son for our salvation as a free gift, to prove His eternal loyalty to us, His people.

May the Lord bless you and keep you. May He make His face to shine upon you and be gracious to you. May the Lord turn His face towards you and give you peace.

Shabbat shalom!

Chukkat Study Questions

1. Why is the Red Heifer so difficult to find and why is it needed?
2. Explain the concepts of 'tamei' and 'tahor' as 'insider' & 'outsider'. How does the blood of Yeshua cleanse us from our defilement? Have you experienced feeling 'accepted in the beloved', cleansed, pure and forgiven (tahor) or do you still feel tamei?
3. Where is the 'ashes of the heifer' mentioned in the New Testament?
4. What is the ultimate goal of the Temple Mount Faithful ?
5. Have you experienced spiritual growth in the 'silent years'?
6. Why do you think Moses was given such a severe punishment for striking the rock? Do you agree or not? Share and discuss.
7. Do you battle with strife? Why is it so destructive? Share your personal experiences and how you deal with it.
8. When faced with a challenge do you most often 'react' or 'respond'. What are the consequences of each way of behaving?
9. How can Abraham's example encourage us when we don't see the promises of God yet coming to pass in our lives? What two qualities do we need to inherit the promises?
10. How do we sometimes bring destruction upon ourselves? How can we avoid this?
11. Do you tend to look back in regret or longing?
12. What can help us to keep a positive, optimistic, faith-filled forward vision?
13. Who was Edom?
14. What did the bronze serpent represent and how does this symbolize Yeshua?
15. What do you think about wearing cross jewelry?
16. Have you ever made a vow that you later needed to break? Share and discuss.
17. How can we help women who are being subjected to domestic violence?

About the Author:

Hannah Neshar grew up in an Orthodox Jewish home and received her education in a religious Hebrew school in Canada. During a crisis pregnancy, she came to know Jesus (Yeshua) as her Messiah and Savior. She now lives in Israel with her children and grandchildren, teaching the Jewish roots of the Christian faith.

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