

# WAGON FULL OF FUEL

*by Rabbi Raymond Beyda*

The book of Vayikra is called Torat Cohanim and it is full of the laws regarding spiritual purity and impurity. The book of Bemidbar, on the other hand, tells of the events in the 40 year sojourn in the desert and the moral and ethical lessons that they teach. How then does the law of the Red Heifer get into Bemidbar? Wouldn't it be more suitable for it to be included amongst all the laws of the book of Vayikra?

Perhaps we can answer that the laws of purity and impurity were brought here as a reaction and reply to the philosophy of Korach. One could not deny that Moshe brought the Torah from Heaven. The people were witness at Har Sinai.

No one could deny that he went up a second time to get the second set of tablets. Korach said: "True, Moshe brought us the Torah and it is the true word of Hashem. However, he really received only the main points of the Torah and he on his own added explanations to suit his own designs." He brought a lot of "proofs" to his claim all of which espoused a basic erroneous philosophy. "If Hashem revealed His thoughts in the Torah - then every thing in the Torah must make sense", he claimed.

He put on an all blue garment with four corners and asked Moshe if it needed a blue string on its corners. Moshe replied that it did as did all four cornered garments regardless of their color. Korach laughed and said, "If one blue string can permit make a garment of another color "kosher" to wear then a garment of all blue should be "kosher" to wear even without any blue string."

He then ridiculed the commandment of mezuzah saying that a house full of Torah scrolls should be exempt because if one little parchment with 22 lines of Torah can fulfill the requirement then a house full of Torah scrolls should not need any mezuzah and yet Moshe ruled that it does. Even though Korach was punished immediately and in the unusual manner requested by Moshe the words of heresy left their mark on the psyche and the soul of the Jewish people. Hashem in His wisdom placed the laws of the Red Heifer adjacent to Korach in order to cleanse Korach's mistaken theories from the Jewish mind forever. The paradigm of Hashem's commandments is the law that says the waters purify one who is impure and defile the one who sprinkles the waters on the impure. It does not make sense. Logically we would say either the waters purify or they defile. Yet the Torah teaches that the very same waters purify one party while defiling another. It does not make sense but it is the law of the Torah. The laws are Hashem's will and we can never really understand, rather we must accept that we cannot understand. The questions brought by Korach make sense if they were not objections to Torah law. The fact they the human mind cannot understand proves all the

more so that it is the "mind" of Hashem that formulated these laws - whether we think we understand or not.

There was once a truck driver who came to a Rabbi with a question. "If a person reads the whole book of Tehillim (Psalms) in the morning before he prays - must he read the portion of the prayers called zemirot which is basically composed of several chapters of Tehillim?"

The sage smiled and answered with a query.

"Could you transport several barrels of fuel for me in your truck tomorrow?"

"Of course!" replied the unsuspecting driver.

"Will you fill the truck's tank with fuel before you leave?" asked the Rabbi.

"Of course, said the driver, "how else will the truck move?"

"But you will have at least 500 gallons of fuel in the bed of the truck?" replied the wise man.

"Yes," said the driver, "but the fuel in the barrels cannot do the job of the fuel in the tank."

"You are correct. The same is true of the Tehillim one might read before prayers and the chapters inserted by our forefathers in the prayers. The function served by those one reads is quite different than the ones the Rabbis inserted in our daily prayers."

The same is true of the "blue" of Korach's garment and the "blue" of the tzitzit as commanded in the Torah. It is not for us to understand. It is for us to accept as true and to do as we are commanded. Moshe is the true prophet and the torah he taught is perfect truth.

Shabbat Shalom Text Copyright &copy 2007 by [Rabbi Raymond Beyda](#) and **[Torah.org](#)**.