

THE TEACHING OF THE RED HEIFER

Text: Numbers 19: 1-22

In Numbers nineteen, we read about the command of Adonai concerning the rite of purification, after one came into contact with a dead body. This rite of purification had to be observed in order to enter the tabernacle and come into the presence of HaShem.

This ordinance is the most mysterious rite in Scripture that it brought bewilderment and mystic into the Rabbis thinking. They said that even King Solomon in all his wisdom despaired of learning the secret meaning of the Red Heifer regulations.

Let us try to unravel this mystery which puzzled King Solomon and many Rabbis through out the ages. To begin this process of unraveling this mystery let us first look at the rite as it is laid out in Numbers nineteen. Then we will search into its typology and lastly its prophetic implications.

a) Qualifications of the Sacrifice (vs. 2)

- i) **Female:** a heifer, which is a young "cow" that has not produced a calf, about two to five years old. The female is the one, which brings forth life.
- ii) **Red:** totally red in colour, not a single hair of any other colour. The red colour was probably chosen to symbolize blood; life is in the blood, in other words "Life".
- iii) **Unblemished:** an animal totally free from blemish or defect, both externally and internally. Perfect health and condition.
- iv) **Unyoked:** must never have been yoked in order to pull a plow or cart. An animal which has never been used for field labour? Full of natural energy.

aa) Qualifications of the Red Heifer Foreshadowed in Yeshua.

(Read: II Corinthians 3:14-16, Hebrews 9:13-14)

- i) **Female:** Yeshua was sold for thirty pieces of silver, the price of a female slave. (Matthew 26:14-15) Yeshua is the only way to eternal life
- He is the source of life. (John 3:14-15; 6:47; 14:6; I Corinthians 15:22)
- ii) **Red:** Yeshua shed His blood; gave His "Life" at Calvary (John 19:34; Hebrews 9:14; I Peter 1:19)
- iii) **Unblemished:** Yeshua was truly man yet without any moral fault, sinless. (Hebrews 7:26; I Peter 1:19)
- iv) **Unyoked:** Although Yeshua was truly human He did not have man's fallen nature or sin nature. Working and toiling in the field is a result of Adam's fall. The yoke can be equated to the bondage of sin. (II Corinthians 5:21; Philippians 2:7; Hebrews 4:15; I John 3:5).

b) Sacrificial Procedure (vs. 3-6)

- i)** Give the heifer to Eleazer the priest.
- ii)** Taken outside the camp.
- iii)** Slaughtered in the presence of the priest.
- iv)** The priest was to take some blood on his finger and sprinkle it seven times in the direction of the tabernacle.
- v)** The heifer's carcass was to be burned entirely: skin, meat, blood, and offal (waste parts).
- vi)** Three items added to the fire: cedar wood, hyssop and scarlet material.
- vii)** At the completion of the burning, the ashes were to be collected and preserved in a clean place outside the camp for future use.

bb) The Sacrificial Procedure Foreshadowed in Yeshua

- i)** They brought Yeshua to the High Priests home.
(Matthew 26:57; Mark 14:53; Luke 22:54; John 18:13)
- ii)** They brought Yeshua outside the city walls to a hill called Golgotha. (Matthew 27:31-34; Mark 15:20-23; Luke 23:26-33; John 19:16-17)
- iii)** The Chief Priests and Teachers of the Law looked on as Yeshua was executed. (Matthew 27:41; Mark 15:31; Luke 23:35)
- iv)** In the sevenfold sprinkling of the blood of the red heifer before the tabernacle, we have a figure of the perfect presentation of the blood of Messiah to Adonai, which demonstrated His completed work done once and for all times.
(John 19:34; Hebrews 9:12; I Peter 1:18-19)

The Sevenfold sprinkling of Blood

Yeshua shed His Blood seven times during the Passion. **i)** In the Garden of Gethsemane/Mount of Olives (Sweat of Blood) - Luke 22:44. **ii)** Pilate had Yeshua flogged (Stripes on the back) – Matthew 27:26; Mark 15:15; John 19:1. **iii)** Set a crown of thorns upon His head... Matthew 27:29; Mark 15:17; John 19:2) **iv)** ...they struck Him on the head... (Beating and plucking the beard) - Matthew 27:30; Mark 15:19; John 19:3. **v)** The nails piercing His hands...& **vi)** The nails piercing His feet... implied in this statement – ‘And they crucified Him...’ Matthew 27:35; Mark 15:24; Luke 23:33; John 19:18, 20:25) **vii)** ...pierced Yeshua’s side with a spear... - John 19:34.

- v)** Yeshua’s whole body was required also. (I Cor 11:23-26; Hebrews 10:5, 10; Philippians 2:8; Colossians 1:22)
- vi)** The three items: cedar wood, hyssop, and scarlet wool. Not sure, there are two options presently.
 - a)** Cedar wood - execution stake
Hyssop - was offered to Yeshua (John 19:29)
Scarlet wool - the scarlet robe put on Yeshua while he was mocked. (Matthew 27:28)
 - b) Read: I John 5:6-8 (?)**

vii) Joseph of Arimathea gathered Yeshua's body and placed it in a new grave outside the city. (Matthew 27:59-60; Mark 15:46; Luke 23:53; John 19:38-42)

- A new grave in which no one had ever been buried - "a clean place" (John 19:41)

c) The Three Items added to the Sacrifice. (vs. 6)

i) Cedar Wood: Symbol of incorruptible, continuance of life; since the wood is so hard and long-living.

ii) Hyssop: symbol of purification from the corruption of death.

iii) Scarlet Wool: most scholars think that it symbolizes blood which fore shadowed the strongest vital energy or life.

- "*The Daily Study Bible*" states that the scarlet stuff was made from cloths dyed in a substance distilled mainly from certain insects. The colour suggests blood and fire, both of which were purifying agents.

- "*Notes on the Book of Numbers*" Scarlet is a type or expression of human splendor, worldly grandeur, the glory of man.

These same three items were used in the purification rite of leprosy. (Lev. 14:6-7, 51-52)

d) Administration of the Water of Cleansing.

i) How? A portion of the ashes of the Red Heifer was to be mixed with running water, and a "clean" person, dipping a bunch of hyssop in the mixture was to sprinkle it on him who was unclean. (vs. 12, 17-18)

ii) When? The one who touches a dead body is unclean for seven days. He must be sprinkled with the water of cleansing on the third day and seventh day of his uncleanness. (vs. 12, 19)

iii) Hebrew Scriptures concerning the waters of cleansing Numbers 8:7; Numbers 31:23; and Psalms 51:7.

"*The Communicator's Commentary*" page 220 states: King David was "*out of touch*" for a whole year before and until he sought the "*purging with hyssop*" mentioned in Psalm 51 (a clear reference to this ordinance in Numbers 19).

iv) Concluding act of cleansing at the close of the seventh day is for the unclean person to wash both his clothes and his body. At sunset of the seventh day he will be considered clean.

dd) Foreshadowing of Yeshua's Work in the Administration of the Water of Cleansing.

- i) Each one of us must accept Yeshua's work in order to be cleansed and have eternal life and be part of the Commonwealth of Israel (*Mystery of the Church*).
- ii) The times to be sprinkled with the water of cleansing were the third and seventh days on uncleanness. Within the Messianic Movement we have discovered God's Blueprint for the ages by way of the Feasts of the Lord.
 - a) **Passover** represents Yeshua's death
 - b) **Unleaven Bread** represents Yeshua's body in the grave.
 - c) **First fruits** represents Yeshua's resurrection.
 - d) **Pentecost** represents the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.
 - e) **Trumpets** could represent the rapture of believers.
 - f) **Day of Atonement** could represent Israel's return to the Lord.
 - g) **Tabernacles** gathering of the nations to Jerusalem, separation of believer from unbelievers.

This rite deals with purification of uncleanness, caused by contact with the dead; death being the wages of sin. (Romans 6:23) Could the third day represent "**First Fruits**" and the seventh day "**Tabernacles**"?

Within the Feast of "**First Fruits**" we see Yeshua rise from the dead victor over the grave and/or the curse of sin. (I Corinthians 15:20).

During the "**Feast of Tabernacles**" we see in Numbers 29:12-40 the command of God for Israel to sacrifice seventy bullocks, a certain number every day of the Feast. The Rabbis explain that this number of seventy bullocks was a sacrifice on behalf of the seventy nations of the world, thus looking toward their conversion to the God of Israel and their gathering under the Shekinah glory (*The Gospel Feasts of Israel; V. Buksbazen*). Zechariah 14:8, 20-21; and Revelation 21:26-27 suggest a final separation and need to be clean in order to enter God's House (or presence).

- iii.) Concluding act of cleansing at the close of the seventh day is washing of the cloths. (Rev. 7:14; 22:14)

e) The Mystery of the Rite. (vs. 7-8, 10a, 21)

- i)** All those involved in the sacrifice of the Red Heifer and the administration of the water of cleansing had to be clean.
- ii)** But their involvement in this rite rendered them unclean until sunset.
- iii)** Method of cleansing:
 - a)** Eleazer the priest and the one which burnt the red heifer had to wash their clothes and body and were unclean until sunset.
 - b)** The one who gathered up the ashes and the one which administered the sprinkling of the water of cleansing had to wash their clothes and were unclean until sunset.
- iv) The Mystery:** The sacrifice, ashes, and water, which purified the unclean defiled the clean.

ee) The Mystery Exposed

1. Yeshua became a sin offering to pay the penalty for our sin and make us clean in Adonai's sight (II Corinthians 5:21). Even though Yeshua was sinless, He freely took our place in judgment. To purify the sinner Yeshua became defiled.
2. The three involved in the sacrifice
 - a) The Red Heifer**
 - i.** Eleazer, the Priest watched.
 - ii.** The man who burned
 - iii.** The man who gathered the ashes
 - b) Yeshua**
 - i.** Chief priests and Teachers also watched
 - ii.** Romans who carried out the execution.
 - iii.** Joseph of Arimathea
3. Defiled until sunset.
Yeshua took on the penalty of the sins of the world and upon His death at the ninth hour (3 pm.); He completed His task as He called out "It is finished" (Matthew 27:45-50; John 19:30).
4. The tearing of the curtain, which separated the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies, took place when Yeshua completed His work at Golgotha. This demonstrated that the believer could now enter into the presence of HaShem through the completed work of Yeshua (Matthew 27:51-54).

f) Consequences of Non-participation.

- i) The person who fails to purify himself with the water of cleansing defiles the Lord's Tabernacle. (vs. 13, 20) Consequence: "*cut off from Israel*" Removed (exclusion) from the covenant people by execution or banishment.
- ii) **Everlasting Statute:** This rite is to be a perpetual ordinance for the Israelites as well as *foreigners* living among them. (vs. 10, 21)

ff) Consequence of non-participation in Yeshua's completed work is eternal damnation. (Rev. 20:15; 21:8)

g) Historical Occurrences

According to the Mishneh, the ceremonial burning of the Red Heifer happened only seven times in Jewish history: once by Moses, once by Ezra and five other times. The last took place shortly **before** 70 AD when the Temple was destroyed by the Romans.

During the time of the Second Temple the sacrifice of the Red Heifer took place on the Mount of Olives. In order for the Priest to lead the Red Heifer over the Kidron Valley, a bridge was built. The purpose for this bridge was to make sure the Priest did not come in contact with a grave or any bones while crossing the valley. The Kidron Valley was on the East Side of the Temple, which was also a graveyard, still is today.

The east side is the side of the Garden of Eden that Adam and Eve were exiled (Gen. 3:24) – the east side is the side of the Temple that the Shekinah Glory of Adonai departed from the Temple (Ezekiel 10:18, 19) – it is on this same side of the Temple that Messiah gave His life as the sacrifice (*burnt offering*) for sin.

The Significance of the Red Heifer for Today.

1. **For the Believer:** Yeshua completed the work of cleansing. Yeshua completed His work between the sixth and the seventh Red Heifer sacrifices. So we can look at Yeshua as the seventh "**Red Heifer**" sacrifice meaning completion. (Hebrews 9:11; 14)
2. **For Israel:** who will rebuild the Third Temple, it is essential that Israel resume this sacrifice of the Red Heifer in order to cleanse the Temple Mount and the Priesthood. Prophetic reference to the waters of cleansing in Ezekiel 36:16-38; Isaiah 52:15.
3. **The Search for the Ashes of the Red Heifer:** The Chief Rabbi of Israel believes the discovery of the ashes and the Ark of the Covenant is keys to the rebuilding of the Temple. A Copper Scroll found with the Dead Sea Scrolls in 1952 tells of the last Red Heifer sacrifice just before the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD. It

states that a clay vessel with the ashes was hidden in a cave before the Romans took over. This holds true for later tradition in Judaism where the ashes were divided in three parts.

- i) One part kept at a designated place in the Temple.
- ii) One part kept on the Mount of Olives; where the slaughter and burning took place.
- iii) One part kept in the care of the Levities.

There is a curious tradition expressed within the Talmud that Gentiles will assist the Jews in the recovery of these necessary Temple implements including the ashes of the Red Heifer.

4. The Red Heifer Breeding Program.

Time Magazine reported on October 16, 1989 that the Chief Rabbi of Israel sent a team of scientists to Europe in August to obtain frozen embryo's of a breed of red cattle, which will be used to raise a pure Red Heifer on an Israeli cattle ranch. This strain of cattle originated from Egypt. They date back to the time of the Exodus.