

A Sacrificial Red Heifer

God said to Moses and Aaron, "This is the statute of the law (Torah) God has commanded. Tell the children of Israel to bring you a young red heifer without spot or blemish and on which never came a yoke. You will give her to Eleazar the priest to bring her outside of the camp to be slaughtered in front of him. Eleazar the priest will take drops of her blood with his finger and sprinkle her blood toward the front of the Tent of Meeting seven times. The red heifer is to be burned in his sight; her skin, her flesh, her blood, with her dung, will be burned. The priest will take cedar wood, hyssop, scarlet wool and toss it into the midst of the burning heifer. Then the priest will wash his clothes and bathe his whole body in water. Afterward he will come into the camp and be unclean until the evening. He who burns the heifer will wash his clothes in water and bathe in water and be unclean until evening. A man who is clean (sanctified) will gather up the ashes of the heifer and lay them up outside of the camp in a clean place (an area unpolluted by human faeces or bones of animals). The ashes will be kept for the congregation of the children of Israel to prepare water for purification. It is a sin offering. He who gathers the ashes of the heifer will wash his clothes, bathe and be unclean until evening ... The unclean will take some of the ashes of the burnt sin offering and running water will be put into a vessel. A clean person will take hyssop, dip it in the water and sprinkle it on the tent, on all the vessels, on the people who were there and on anyone who touched a human bone, the slain, the dead or a grave. The clean person will sprinkle the unclean people on the third day and on the seventh day. On the seventh day he will purify them then and he will wash his clothes, bathe himself in water and will be clean by evening" (Numbers 19:1 to 10, 17 to 19).

The sacrificial red heifer was much more significant than any other sacrificial animal because of the spiritual parallels between the sacrifice of Jesus and the red heifer. There were many other 'heifer' offerings but the specific red heifer was only ever mentioned in the Bible once. The red heifer in particular represented the details of the sacrifice of Jesus that was to take place thousands of years later. The offering of the red heifer was prophecy in action. There are currently some 'conspiracy' theories surrounding the red heifer but once we understand the spiritual significance of it, we will be able to comprehend what the Lord God was telling the Jewish people about the coming Messiah – that is His first appearance on earth not His second coming. There is no Bible verse inferring any other red heifer will usher in the second coming of the Messiah. The red heifer sacrificial active prophecy detailed in Numbers 19:1 to 19 was a singular event, just as the coming of Jesus as a sacrifice for all mankind was a singular event.

The red heifer had to be without spot or blemish (Numbers 19:2); Jesus was without blemish, meaning He was without sin. 'Jesus, Who knew no sin was made to be sin on our behalf so in Him we might become the righteousness of God' (2 Corinthians 5:21). When Jesus returns, He will be looking for His church to be without spot or blemish. 'Jesus loved the assembly (church) and gave Himself up for it so He might sanctify it, having cleansed it by the washing of water with the Word (the Bible) so He might present the assembly to Himself gloriously, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing but it should be holy and without blemish' (Ephesians 5:25 to 27). 'If the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who have been defiled can sanctify the flesh, how much more will the blood of Jesus cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? Jesus, Who through the eternal Holy Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God. For this reason, because His death has occurred for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, He is the mediator of a new covenant so people who have been called (to walk with God) may receive the promise of eternal inheritance' (Hebrews 9:13 to 15).

The red heifer had to be pure and untouched – never having carried the burden of a yoke (Numbers 19:2) and never had contact with a bull – never mated (Deuteronomy 21:3). Jesus carried the heavy 'yoke' of the cross for a short distance before Simon of Cyrene was forced to carry the cross the rest of the way (Mark 15:21). Jesus never married and was completely pure in heart.

The Hebrew Scriptures say she was to be a young heifer (in Hebrew 'phre adme' meaning a young red female cow). God said to Abraham, "Bring Me a heifer three years old" (Genesis 15:9). To be a heifer, the animal had to be three years old or less. Any older and it is no longer a heifer but a mature cow. Jesus conducted His ministry for three years. 'When Jesus began to teach He was about thirty years old' (Luke 3:23). Jesus enjoyed three Passover celebrations (three years) with His disciples during His ministry; the last one was a few days before He died (John 2:13; John 6:4; John 11:55).

The red heifer was sacrificed outside the camp (Numbers 19:3); Jesus was sacrificed outside the city. 'The animals, whose blood is brought into the holy place by the high priest as an offering for sin, are burned outside of the camp. Jesus also, so He might sanctify the people through His own blood, suffered and died outside of the city gate' (Hebrews 13:11 & 12).

The blood of the red heifer was sprinkled on people to sanctify them (Numbers 19:4); the blood of Jesus was shed so all those who believe in Him would be sanctified (Hebrews 10:10). The priest and those working with the red heifer were cleansed in water after the heifer was sacrificed. None of the Israelites could be sanctified until after the red heifer had been sacrificed. After Jesus came, no person could be spiritually cleansed and sanctified until the believers were 'washed' in the pure water of the Word of God and 'washed' by the blood of the Lamb (John 15:3; 17:17; Ephesians 5:26; Revelation 7:14; 12:11). The priest sprinkled the blood of the red heifer seven times (Numbers 19:4), once for each day of the week. One day signifies one thousand years. 'A thousand years in Your sight are just like yesterday when it is past' (Psalm 90:4). 'Do not forget this one thing beloved, one day with the Lord is as a thousand years and a thousand years is as one day' (2 Peter 3:8). Seven times signifies the seven thousand years the Lord intends this earth to be inhabited. We see this numbering again with the ashes of the red heifer.

The ashes from the red heifer were held in a clean place for three days, mixed with water, sprinkled on the people and only then they were considered spiritually clean (Numbers 19:9, 17 & 18). The water represented being cleansed from sin. God said, "I will sprinkle clean water on you and you will be clean from all your (spiritual) filthiness" (Ezekiel 36:25 & 26). Jesus said, "Truly I tell you, unless you are born-again you cannot see the Kingdom of God ... Truly I tell you, unless one is born of water (baptism) and by the Holy Spirit you cannot enter the Kingdom of God" (John 3:3 & 5). The sprinkling of the water with ash was to take place on the third and seventh days (Numbers 19:19). It took three days for the ash to become ceremonially clean. The ceremony of the sacrifice of the first red heifer took place about three thousand years after creation and the fulfilment of the 'prophecy in action' will be when Jesus comes again at the start of the seventh thousand years after creation. The three days holding the ashes also signifies the three days before Jesus was resurrected when He spent three days and three nights in hell preaching the Gospel to the people who had already died. 'As Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the whale, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth' (Matthew 12:40). 'Jesus went and preached to the spirits in hell ... The Gospel was preached even to the dead so they could be judged in the same way as people in the flesh, but live as to God in the spirit' (1 Peter 3:19; 4:6).

The red heifer was burned with cedar wood, hyssop and scarlet wool (Numbers 19:6); Jesus was nailed to a cross made of wood, although we will never know if the cross was made of cedar wood or some other type of wood because the Gospels do not specify. Hyssop was burned with the red heifer; Jesus was offered a sponge soaked in sour wine and impaled on hyssop moments before He died to quench His thirst. 'In My thirst they gave Me vinegar to drink' (Psalm 69:21). 'Jesus saw all things were now finished and so the Scripture might be fulfilled He said, "I am thirsty." They put a sponge full of vinegar on hyssop and held it at His mouth. When Jesus had received the vinegar He said, "It is finished." He bowed His head and gave up His spirit' (John 19:28 to 30). The scarlet wool signifies the blood of Jesus. We know wool comes from sheep and He was the sacrificial Lamb. When the Roman soldiers were mocking Jesus, they forced Him to wear a scarlet robe. 'They (Roman soldiers) removed His clothing and put a scarlet robe on Him ... When they had mocked Him, they took the robe off Him and put His own clothes back on Him then led Him away to crucify Him' (Matthew 27:28 & 31). Three days after Jesus rose again to appear to His disciples, He was not wearing His blood splattered robe but a robe glistening white just as He wore when He was transfigured on the Mount of Olives. 'His clothing became glistening, exceedingly white like snow, such as no launderer on earth can whiten them' (Mark 9:3).

'He (Jesus) poured out His soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors' (Isaiah 53:12). 'They came to the place which is called 'The Skull' and there they crucified Him along with the criminals, one on the right and one on the left' (Luke 23:33). Jesus was numbered with (counted among) the wicked, meaning He died with men who transgressed the commandments of God. 'They (Roman soldiers) crucified Him with two robbers; one on His right and one on His left. The Scripture (in Isaiah 53:12) was fulfilled which says, "He was numbered with transgressors" (Mark 15:27 & 28). In this context, to be numbered was to be counted. 'Take a census of all the congregation of the children of Israel by their families, by their forefathers' houses according to the number of the names, every male, one by one from twenty years old and upward, all who are able to go out to war in Israel' (Numbers 1:2 & 3). Another way of saying the people were counted is the same as we use in English for a head count, 'per head of population'. When we reserve a group booking in a restaurant, we book for the number of people who will be in attendance as 'per head'. The Hebrew word in this context for 'per head' is 'per skull' or glgith. By adding vowels we could write that word as golgoth, or as the Gospels say, 'They came to a place called Golgotha which means 'The Place of a Skull' (Matthew 27:33; Mark 15:22). 'They took Jesus and led Him away. He went out bearing His own cross to the place called 'The Place of the Skull', in Hebrew it is called Golgotha' (John 19:17). The word Golgotha means 'per head' or 'per skull'. Jesus was crucified in the area where the ancient tribes of Israel were counted for their census – per skull of population.

The red heifer had to be so perfect, according to Jewish history, only seven or nine perfect red heifers have ever been born and sacrificed since the first one mentioned in Numbers 19:2. Some rabbi's today believe they have the most perfect one ready to be sacrificed, however God's timing is not yet complete so the red heifer born in 2007 is already too old. She is no longer a young heifer, she is an aging cow. God gave us the symbolic ceremony of the red heifer to prophesy about the coming of our Messiah, the pure Red Heifer Who was sacrificed and gave His blood for us. Why a red heifer and not a pure white heifer? Because the red symbolises blood and we can only become pure after being spiritually covered by the red blood of Jesus. White symbolises purity and after being resurrected we will all wear pure white robes. 'A long white robe was given to each of them' (Revelation 6:11). 'Behold a great multitude which no man could number, out of every nation, of all tribes, peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, dressed in white robes ... "These who are arrayed in white robes, who are they and from where did they come?" "These are the believers who came out of the great tribulation. They washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb"' (Revelation 7:9, 13 & 14).

Amen and God bless you.

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