

By Reb Jimmy Rittenhouse

Numbers 19:2- 6

“Speak to the sons of Yisrael that they take for you a completely red cow on which there is no blemish and on which no yoke has ever come. And you shall give it to Eleazar the priest; he shall take it out, outside the camp, and he shall slaughter it before his countenance. And Eleazar the priest shall take of its blood with his finger and sprinkle its blood toward the front of the tent of Appointed Meeting, seven times. The cow shall thereafter be burned before his eyes; its skin, its flesh, its blood, along with its dung, shall be burned. And the priest shall take a piece of cedar wood and hyssop and scarlet wool and he shall throw it into the burning of the cow.

Numbers 19:9-10

“A man who is pure shall then gather up the ashes of the cow and lay them down outside the camp in a pure place. It shall remain for the sons of Yisrael to be kept as a water of separation; it is an offering that clears of sin. And the one who gathers the ashes of the cow shall rinse his garments and shall remain unclean until that evening. And this shall be for the sons of Yisrael and for the stranger who has entered into their midst- as an everlasting statute.”

Numbers 19:19-21

“The pure person shall sprinkle upon the unclean person on the third day and on the seventh day and shall purify him on the seventh day; he shall wash his garments and bath in water and become pure in the evening. But one who becomes unclean and does not clear himself of sin, that soul shall be uprooted from the midst of the community, for he has defiled the sanctuary of G-D; water of separation has been dashed upon him; he is unclean. It shall remain for them an everlasting statute. One who sprinkles water of separation for another purpose has to wash his garments and one who touches water of separation shall remain unclean until the evening.”

The Rabbis have categorized the law of the Red Heifer as “Chukat Hatorah”. Chukat Hatorah translates as “Statute of the Torah”. It has come to mean a command that is beyond human understanding. In contrast, the term Mishpatim translates as Ordinances and is referenced for commands that are easily understandable.

Why is the laws associated with the Red Heifer considered beyond our understanding? The Red Heifer deals specifically with the defilement by those who have come into contact with a lifeless body. The ashes of the Red Heifer are used in the sprinkling of the waters of separation on the third and seventh day to purify those defiled, yet to the priest who prepares the ashes and the water of separation becomes unclean in the process. **How can something that is used to make people pure make others impure?** This is why it is called a Chukim.

What is the purpose of the burnt offering and the collecting of the ashes of the Red Heifer? The Red Heifer is set aside for one thing, purification from death. When one comes into contact with the deceased they enter into a state of impurity unlike any other

time, it is the most spiritually wrong we can be. There is nothing more unclean than a corpse; it represents man made in the image of G-D and master over creation fallen. Death is the very opposite of the nature of G-D, Matthew 22 tells us He is "the G-D of the living not of the dead". G-D is the creator and the source of all life, death is the greatest enigma in the universe for it stands in opposition to the creator himself. When the breath of life entered into the nostrils of Adam in Gan Eden he was to live eternally. Death entered into the world as a result of Adams sin.

I am going to do the unthinkable and try to explain to you the law of the Red Heifer and what it represents.

Let's take a look at the preparations of the Red Heifer and how it paints a beautiful word picture of our Messiah.

1. The Heifer must be entirely red: Red speaks of blood and impurity and that impurity is only washed away by blood.

2. The Heifer must be without blemish: In order for defilement to be washed away only the blood of a spotless sacrifice will suffice. It represents perfection and sinlessness.

3. The Heifer must be unyoked all of its days: Rabbinical sources teach us that the Heifer must be 3 years old in order to meet the standards of Kashrut. From the time it is born until the time it meets death no yoke can come upon its back. For three years the animal is set apart so as to meet death so that those defiled by death can be purified.

4. The Heifer is slaughtered outside the camp: Unlike other sacrifices the Red Heifer was sacrificed outside the camp. Its blood is sprinkled toward the mercy seat in front of the Tabernacle, symbolically being applied to the mercy seat just as the blood on Yom Kippur.

The Heifer was burnt in its entirety outside the camp: The Heifer was a whole burnt offering to G-D and entirely consumed.

There were three elements added to the burnt ashes of the Heifer.

1. Cedar wood is aromatic by nature and reminds of the sweet aroma that is pleasing unto Hashem and His acceptance of the offering.

2. Hyssop is used for the benefit of purification. Psalm 51:9 "Purify me with hyssop, and I shall be clean." It is not only added to the burnt ashes but it is also used to sprinkle the waters of separation upon the defiled person.

3. The scarlet cord is symbolic of the scarlet cord which is tied to the scape goat and the Temple wall on Yom Kippur.

Let's continue on with the ashes. Here is where the sages find difficulty. Scripture commands that the priest who offers the Burnt Offering, gathers the ashes, and prepares the "Waters of separation" must be in a state of purity; however the moment he performs any of these services he becomes impure or Niddah. The priest who must come pure in his service takes on the uncleanness of the person defiled by death so that he may become pure again.

The ashes are then mixed into water creating what is referred to as "The Waters of Separation". Here is the key to understanding this passage. Most translations of the

Hebrew text call this “The Waters of Purity.” It is referred to as “The Waters of Purity” because it is sprinkled by the hyssop upon the defiled person on the third and seventh day to make him pure.

A close look at the Hebrew text reveals something pretty awesome. The mixture is called “May Niddah”, the term used for a woman’s menstrual cycle. Niddah accurately translates as separation or impurity. Just like a woman’s flow is a small death and results in her impurity so are the “Waters of Niddah”. The one who prepares it and the one who sprinkles it because impure and partakes of death so that the one defiled by death may become pure. Purity comes from the waters of impurity. Here is the big picture: **At the beginning we asked “How can something that is used to make people pure make others impure?” Let me ask this another way; How can “The waters of Separation” used to redeem one from the defilement of death make the ones preparing it defiled?”** Death can only be conquered by death.

Throughout the Scriptures we are reminded that G-D who is all merciful is also all righteous and all Just. As creatures who are made in His image we bring impurity to His name by our sins, as a result death is required. “Sin requires payment because sin has robbed G-D of His glory.”

Hebrews 9:16-22

“For where a covenant is, there must of necessity be the death of the one who made it. For a covenant is valid only when men are dead, for it is never in force while the one who made it lives. Therefore even the first covenant was not inaugurated without blood. For when every commandment had been spoken by Moshe to all the people according to the Torah, he took the blood of the calves and the goats, with water and scarlet wool and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people, saying, “THIS IS THE BLOOD OF THE COVENANT WHICH G-D COMMANDED YOU.” And in the same way he sprinkled both the Tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry with the blood. And according to the Torah, one may almost say, all things are cleansed with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.”

The Ashes remind us of the Genesis of mans creation, “From dust we are born and to dust we shall return.” This is the natural course of events in a fallen world. However:

Romans 6:3-11

“Or do you not know that all of us who have been Mikvahed into Messiah Y-shua have been Mikvahed into His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him through Mikvah into death, so that as Messiah was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; for he who has died is freed from sin. Now if we have died with Messiah, we believe that we shall also live with Him, knowing that Messiah, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again; death no longer is master over Him. For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to G-d. Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to G-d in Messiah Y-shua.”

Of all the sacrifices that speak of our Messiah, from the Paschal lamb to the scapegoat on Yom Kippur, I believe none speak more of Him more than the Red Heifer.

Y-shua is the sacrifice without blemish.

He was sacrificed outside the camp.

He would bare upon Himself the impurity of those who have been defiled by sin and death.

He is a sweet aroma unto Hashem who received the sacrifice as payment for sin.

He cleanses all who are sprinkled by his waters of His death.

He won the victory over death by His own death.

Remember that the Red Heifer was to be entirely consumed outside the camp. This is one area where the Red Heifer is unlike Y-shua for He was not consumed by death but conquered death. Is this not what Paul is teaching us, the Red Heifer like all the other sacrifices never had the power to remove sin and because they had to be offered regularly they did not have the power to conquer death.?