

Numbers 19:1 ¶ And the LORD spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying,
Numbers 19:2 This *is* the ordinance of the law which the LORD hath commanded, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, that they bring thee a red heifer without spot, wherein *is* no blemish, *and* upon which never came yoke:

Numbers 19:3 And ye shall give her unto Eleazar the priest, that he may bring her forth without the camp, and *one* shall slay her before his face:

Numbers 19:4 And Eleazar the priest shall take of her blood with his finger, and sprinkle of her blood directly before the tabernacle of the congregation seven times:

Numbers 19:5 And *one* shall burn the heifer in his sight; her skin, and her flesh, and her blood, with her dung, shall he burn:

Numbers 19:6 And the priest shall take cedar wood, and hyssop, and scarlet, and cast *it* into the midst of the burning of the heifer.

In this chapter we are introduced to the significance of the red heifer in maintaining ceremonial cleanliness. This is a subject that is currently in the news as many Jews look forward to rebuilding the temple and reinstating the sacrificial system. Though the search has been ongoing for several years, they have yet to find a red heifer that qualifies. Guzik notes that a heifer is: "...a cow which has never been pregnant, and thus cannot yet give milk."

The LORD instructed Moses and Aaron to have the people bring them a red heifer without spot or blemish that had never been yoked and give it to Eleazar the priest. Eleazar is to take the animal outside the camp and kill it. He is then to take her blood and using his finger is to sprinkle some of the animal's blood in the direction of the tabernacle seven times. He is then to witness the burning of the heifer including her skin, her flesh, her blood and her dung. Eleazar is then to throw some cedar wood, hyssop and scarlet into the midst of the burning heifer.

JFB offered an interesting insight: "It has been supposed the ordinance was designed in opposition to the superstitious notions of the Egyptians. That people never offered a vow but they sacrificed a red bull, the greatest care being taken by their priests in examining whether it possessed the requisite characteristics, and it was an annual offering to Typhon, their evil being. By the choice, both of the sex and the color, provision was made for eradicating from the minds of the Israelites a favorite Egyptian superstition regarding two objects of their animal worship."

Numbers 19:7 Then the priest shall wash his clothes, and he shall bathe his flesh in water, and afterward he shall come into the camp, and the priest shall be unclean until the even.

Numbers 19:8 And he that burneth her shall wash his clothes in water, and bathe his flesh in water, and shall be unclean until the even.

Upon completing these duties, the priest was to wash his clothes and bathe his flesh in water. He could then return to the camp, but was considered to be unclean until the evening. The one that had burned the heifer (I am assuming

one of the Levites) was also to wash his clothes and bathe his flesh in water; he too would remain unclean until the evening.

Numbers 19:9 And a man *that is* clean shall gather up the ashes of the heifer, and lay *them up* without the camp in a clean place, and it shall be kept for the congregation of the children of Israel for a water of separation: it is a purification for sin.

Numbers 19:10 And he that gathereth the ashes of the heifer shall wash his clothes, and be unclean until the even: and it shall be unto the children of Israel, and unto the stranger that sojourneth among them, for a statute for ever.

A different man (another Levite I assume) that was ceremonially clean was to gather up the ashes of the burnt heifer and take them to a clean place outside the camp for mixing with water as purification for sin. This man was also to wash his clothes and remain unclean until the evening. This instruction is to be continued perpetually to maintain spiritual cleanliness after coming into contact with a dead body.

According to information supplied by www.templeinstitute.org: "The Mishna teaches that up until the destruction of the Second Temple, ashes had been prepared from a total of only nine red heifers." It also references the fact that according to ancient tradition, "...the tenth red heifer is associated with the Messianic era." Interesting to say the least in light of the abundance of other signs flashing all around us that declare the soon return of Jesus the Messiah.

Really interesting is the fact that all those involved in the preparation of the ashes that would be used in the water of purification are made unclean by the process (through association with the dead animal). I believe this is yet another picture of Jesus. He was crucified outside the city and became unclean when he became my sin in order to redeem me and impute to me the very righteousness of God.

2 Corinthians 5:21 "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."

Numbers 19:11 ¶ He that toucheth the dead body of any man shall be unclean seven days.

Numbers 19:12 He shall purify himself with it on the third day, and on the seventh day he shall be clean: but if he purify not himself the third day, then the seventh day he shall not be clean.

Numbers 19:13 Whosoever toucheth the dead body of any man that is dead, and purifieth not himself, defileth the tabernacle of the LORD; and that soul shall be cut off from Israel: because the water of separation was not sprinkled upon him, he shall be unclean; his uncleanness is yet upon him.

Any person that touches the dead body of any man was to be declared unclean for seven days. The person is to be purified using water with the ashes of the red heifer on the third day. He/she can then be declared clean on the seventh day. If, however, he does not purify himself on the third day, he will remain unclean and will be cut off from the congregation of Israel.

The “third day” jumps out as we look for how everything in scripture points to Jesus because Jesus resurrected from the grave on the third day. The fact that those who refuse to use the water of purification are cast out of the congregation points to those that refuse to accept the sacrifice of Jesus whose blood purifies them from sin and will be cast out of His presence for eternity.

Numbers 19:14 This is the law, when a man dieth in a tent: all that come into the tent, and all that is in the tent, shall be unclean seven days.

Numbers 19:15 And every open vessel, which hath no covering bound upon it, is unclean.

When a person died in a tent, every person that enters that tent and everything in that tent are declared unclean for seven days. Every open vessel, those without a lid or covering, is declared unclean.

Numbers 19:16 And whosoever toucheth one that is slain with a sword in the open fields, or a dead body, or a bone of a man, or a grave, shall be unclean seven days.

Any person that touches one who has been killed with a sword, or a dead body, or a bone of a man, or a grave are to be declared unclean for seven days.

Numbers 19:17 And for an unclean person they shall take of the ashes of the burnt heifer of purification for sin, and running water shall be put thereto in a vessel:

Numbers 19:18 And a clean person shall take hyssop, and dip it in the water, and sprinkle it upon the tent, and upon all the vessels, and upon the persons that were there, and upon him that touched a bone, or one slain, or one dead, or a grave:

Numbers 19:19 And the clean person shall sprinkle upon the unclean on the third day, and on the seventh day: and on the seventh day he shall purify himself, and wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water, and shall be clean at even.

Any person that has become unclean for any of these reasons is to take some ashes of the red heifer and put it into a container that is then filled with running water (from a fresh water source). A clean person is to take a branch of hyssop and dip it into the water and sprinkle it upon the tent, upon all the vessels (I am assuming the open ones) and persons that were in the presence of the dead person, and upon anyone that had touched a bone, or a person that had been killed or was dead, or had come in contact with a grave. It seems that this was to be done on the third day and on the seventh day.

The wording of the last part of verse 19 is a bit confusing. As I first read it, it sounded like the clean person then had to purify himself by washing his clothes and bathing himself in water. This fits in with the above instructions regarding the clean person that collected the ashes of the red heifer. Some of the translations indicate that this instruction is directed toward those that had been

unclean.

Numbers 19:20 But the man that shall be unclean, and shall not purify himself, that soul shall be cut off from among the congregation, because he hath defiled the sanctuary of the LORD: the water of separation hath not been sprinkled upon him; he is unclean.

The LORD reiterates that the person that is unclean and chooses not to purify himself is to be cut off from among the congregation because he has defiled the place of the LORD's presence.

Numbers 19:21 And it shall be a perpetual statute unto them, that he that sprinkleth the water of separation shall wash his clothes; and he that toucheth the water of separation shall be unclean until even.

Numbers 19:22 And whatsoever the unclean person toucheth shall be unclean; and the soul that toucheth it shall be unclean until even.

It is to be a perpetual ritual for the people of Israel that the clean person that sprinkles the water of purification is to wash his clothes and remain unclean until the evening. That is because the water contains the ashes of the dead animal. Anything that is touched by an unclean person is declared unclean, and any person that touches an unclean item is to be declared unclean until evening.

I liked Guzik's observation: "This shows that uncleanness cannot correct itself. The unclean man will not just become clean. He must do something, and he must do what God says must be done in order to be clean. His own plans or schemes for cleansing mean nothing."

Every time we read that these laws are to remain valid perpetually, we know that this is in reference to the old covenant based on the law. Once Jesus came and sacrificed Himself for our sin and resurrected from the grave, He ushered in a better covenant—a covenant of grace. Though the Jews do not yet accept that truth, they soon will.

Hebrews 9:13–15 "For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance."

I think it is also to be noted that not only did God's instructions serve to maintain ceremonial cleanliness before Him, they also served as important health precautions against the spread of disease.